

***Familiar Ground: Expressing Post-Diasporic Scottish  
Identity through Collage and Print***

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Roslyn Meeker

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## ABSTRACT

The Masters research project was motivated by a desire to explore and represent my identity as a Scottish-Australian through the visual means of collage and printmaking. I aimed to investigate diaspora, displacement, the notion of a hand-me-down homeland and an imagined place-based identity, which was pursued through an exploration of the tension between cultural experiences of the authentic (“scottishry”) and the kitch (“tartanry”). The topic looks back to my grandparents’ arrival in Australia a century ago and considers the adherence to Scottish culture pursued by the following generations.

The research appropriates a pictorial language common to the Scottish Diaspora and views it as a closed set: as having changed little since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These images and symbols are considered in a Post-Modern and Post-Colonial context and I interrogated the role played by romanticism, myth and metaphor in the picturing of a Scottish homeland by the descendants of immigrant Scots and their descendants. Tartanry – the kitsch in Scottish culture, and Scottishry – the authentic, is discussed in this exegesis to yield insights on how attachments can be made to quite false aspects of Scottish history or culture.

The visual thesis was developed through the mediums of collage and print, often integrating the appropriation devices of remediation and *détournement*. The exegesis elaborates on such method and outlines a rationale for various mediums including the role of collage in the image making and soft ground steel etching and photopolymer etchings in the plate making. Two series of works, *The Imagineerings* and *Imagineering Metaphors* were made in this manner.

The third series, *Field Research*, was a response to a genealogical pilgrimage; a family reunion and commemorative occasion in Scotland. It was an authentic experience, but one still subject to input from my own imagination. This series features digitally enhanced prints interrupted by photopolymer etchings.

My contextual field is described through analysis of various artists from fields influencing this submission including printmaking technique, collage and appropriation, Australian multicultural art, Scottish romanticism and Scottish



identity. Two exhibitions, *For Auld Lang Syne: Images of Scottish Australia from First Fleet to Federation* staged at The Art Gallery of Ballarat, curated by Dr Alison Inglis and Patricia Tryon Macdonald, and *Scottish Identity in Art*, at the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland, were also scrutinised for the purposes of contextualisation.

Formed from cultural legacy, imagined home and homecoming, *Familiar Ground* stands alongside contemporary research into the Scottish diaspora, the idea of a peculiar Scottish gaze and a current re-emergence of conversation in regard to Scottish identity.

Key words: identity, psychological landscape, Scottish diaspora, collage, *détournement* Printmaking, Photopolymer etching, etching, imagineering.

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With a project titled *Familiar Ground* it is only proper for me to acknowledge the Palawa people of Tasmania, the long lost Kuringai tribe of Sydney and also the many clans of Scotland, the people of the places of my residence and my imagining. I wish to acknowledge my paternal family, those with whom I grew up and those only recently met during the course of study. These thanks extend to all those who made the 2014 family reunion in Scotland possible and complete. I wholeheartedly thank my sister, Alison Mackey, who has shared my love of family stories, finished my sentences, harmonised in song, and always believed in my artistic studies and pursuits. I thank her for the phone calls, the financial investment and the love.

## DEDICATION

In the year 1885, in the small Ayrshire town of Crossmichael, Scotland, a John McDowall was born. He was the second son of Andrew and Elizabeth. In 1888 father Andrew died of tuberculosis and Elizabeth took the two children to the home of her uncle, Andrew Galloway, in the nearby township of Barrhill. In 1898 Elizabeth died leaving the orphaned boys in the care of Andrew Galloway and John took up an apprenticeship as a stonemason. In 1907 John travelled to the East Lothian township of Haddington to take up the position of foreman stonemason.

John married local girl Agnes Cranston on New Year's Day in 1912. Very soon after they left on a steamship for Australia and settled in Sydney. Agnes was one of a large family. In the years that followed Europe collapsed into war and four of her brothers died in military service, another two incapacitated for life. Many family links were broken.

In 1915 John and Agnes purchased a block of land in Pymble, a suburb on Sydney's northern shore. John quarried from the site the stones with which he built the now heritage listed home *Barrhill*.

John and Agnes had four children. The second child was Andrew Galloway McDowall, born on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, 1914, in inner Sydney. He served in an Australian 'Black Watch' regiment as Drum Major. He also served in the engineers in World War II, as well as working as a building inspector for The Commonwealth Department of Works. Andrew was often seen in dress or regimental kilts. He acted as dress judge at Highland Gatherings, attended the Claymore Lodge and founded a Scots Society. He died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 1975. He was my father, the primary source of my love for all things Scottish. I dedicate the entirety of this Masters submission to him in fond memory.

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## INTRODUCTION

The love of field and coppice,  
Of green and shaded lanes.  
Of ordered woods and gardens  
Is running in your veins.  
– *My Country* Dorothea Mackellar, 1904

The proposal for this Masters research, *Familiar Ground*, declared my intent to produce a body of work referencing nostalgic, psychological connections between geographical locales. This intention drew from my Honour's thesis, *Common Ground*, which concentrated on both physical and psychological landscape via the Tasmanian landscape and issues of consensus and division and, in turn, continued subject matter concerning time and place in my undergraduate studies.

As the research progressed and I refined the framework of my study it became apparent that the focus was on identity rather than place. My reading of *Highland Homecomings*, and other works by anthropologist Paul Basu, confirmed that my original propositions about the persistence of Scottish culture in my family were accurately described and well-founded. In addition, I learnt that Scotland remains an imaginary homeland for very many others, and the attachment to things Caledonian felt by my family and myself is in no way unusual, but common to the Scottish diaspora. [The] diaspora is cemented through shared imagining of its homeland', says Basu (2007 p. 92). Basu's research was revealing and convincing, and I accepted that mine was a topic of identity, and my terms of reference expanded.

To give context to my work I have given attention to the diasporic, biographic works produced in the Tasmanian College of the Arts Hunter Street print studio in recent years and investigated and found similarities in the work of Danie Mellor and my own. I looked at the imagery of Scottish identity, the romantic paintings and prints of the past and works with a contemporary take on identity by Scottish artist Rachel

Maclean. In an endeavour to understand my method I have looked at the surrealist Max Ernst and his collages, and appropriation through Duchamp and Debord. Collage and appropriation seemed from the start a quite natural way to approach the *Familiar Ground* etchings but during the research a strong case for its use emerged into artists dealing with issues of diaspora and displacement. I have sought to place the research within the field of Australian Post-Modern, Post-Colonial, multicultural art and discourse.

In 2014 I travelled to Scotland, to Haddington, for a reunion of the Cranston family. The idea for a reunion of the descendants of Elizabeth and William Cranston grew alongside my cousin, Stuart Pearson's, endeavours to see a fitting tribute for the Cranston boys installed in their hometown. It was first mooted in the period of time between my first proposal and my Master's confirmation, in late 2012.

My use of 'post-diasporic' as a qualifier to 'identity' is purposeful. It might be correct to see myself as part of the Scottish diaspora but my identity can also be described as Australian–Scottish. I believe my narrative to be a post-diasporic one as it comes well after the migration wave, and is informed by post-colonial discourse.

The title *Familiar Ground* is a multiple pun as 'familiar' can pertain to both the ordinary and the familial, and 'ground' can relate to earth/landscape, the picture plane, or the amalgam of rosin, beeswax, tallow and asphaltum applied to the surface of a metal plate for etching.



## CHAPTER ONE: PICTURING FAMILIAR GROUND

*Landscapes are culture by nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and rock and water.[..] But it should be acknowledged that once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents, of becoming, in fact, part of scenery. (Schama 1996 p. 61)*



Figure 1 Roslyn Meeker *Thistle Moon Rising* 2015 22 x 10cm Photopolymer Etching, Watercolour

In the prologue to his book *Highland Homecomings – Genealogy and Heritage Tourism in the Scottish Diaspora*, anthropologist Paul Basu retells a scene based on a true story, from the 1937 novel *Highland River* by Neil M. Gunn. Two men meet in the World War One trenches of Northern France. One is a native Highlander and the other a Canadian of Highland descent. The Canadian has the upper hand when it comes to his attained knowledge of Scottish history and lore, and recognises the Caledonian landmarks the Scot drops into conversation. The Scot has knowledge of the country as ‘ground.’ They resolve to meet after the war is over when the Scot will take the Canadian up river, where they will poach a salmon and experience the sunrise from the Highlands. (Basu 2007 p.xi)

Basu observes that many diasporic Scots have never visited Scotland but nevertheless been raised on stories and descriptions of the old Country and are avid readers of Scottish books and websites and watchers of Scottish films. Such people have long imagined Scotland, its historical places, its landscapes, and the character of its people. (Basu 2007 p.53) My contemplation of both psychological landscape and physical ground has underpinned much of my printmaking and research in recent years, and my Masters project was originally conceived of within this framework. Although quite well-read in Scottish history and literature, my knowledge of Scotland as 'ground' is scant. I initially undertook to respond to Scotland as psychological 'place' and a hand-me-down homeland.

My intent for image making was to romance my childhood interpretations of the Auld Country. It wasn't that my family did not embrace Australian culture. Far from it. Barbeques and days at the football or the beach were common fare. Yet these activities were supplemented with evenings of my father standing by the piano, singing songs of a Scottish home, and the attendance of events such as Highland Gatherings and Pipe Band Society dances. Both cultures were embraced. As Prentis writes, "The first alternative risked idealisation, romanticism and trivialising; the second risked disappearance.[...] Hence 'Caledonianism' and 'assimilationism' were both strongly espoused and practised, sometimes by the same people.' (2008 p. 217)

The story I heard growing up was that a coin was tossed. It was heads for Australia and tails for Canada, as there were members of the Cranston Family already having migrated to both destinations. 2012 was the centenary of my grandparent's arrival in Australia. Like many others, my grandparents left Scotland in what is now being described as an 'imperial diaspora', brought about by colonial expansion, not the more well-known 'victim diaspora' the Highland Clearances. (Basu 2007 p. 11) At the time, Australia had great need of skilled tradesmen and my grandfather John McDowall was a master stonemason. His stonework still stands in the Scottish township of Haddington and throughout Sydney's North Shore. He worked on the north east pylon of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and he built a beautiful family home, *Barrhill*, which was Heritage registered in 2008.



Figure 2 John McDowall and Agnes McDowall (nee Cranston) outside *Barrhill*, Pymble NSW. Late 1920s.

Source: <<http://haddington-cranstons.wikispaces.com/AH+Cranston+-+images>>

At the outset I wished to make images that fully engaged with nostalgia: nostalgia, in its modern meaning of a whimsical look at the past, as well as its archaic meaning. The word is derived from the Greek, and translates as ‘homecoming’ ‘pain’ and is an important trope in Romanticism.

The nostalgic idea of homecoming is enmeshed in my subject matter as, one after another, my generation make their ‘return to the source.’ To each one the journey had much meaning. Through research I now know the language I used when I first visited Scotland in 2004, to explain my presence to the local inhabitants, was the language of the diaspora. I would explain to the locals that I was in Scotland representing my father and grandfather who always wished to ‘gae hame’ one day. I would say I was on a pilgrimage. Basu discusses such sentiments (2007 p. 56) I *did* experience the liminality. I *did* experience a ‘spookiness’ in the township of Ballantrae, the 18<sup>th</sup> century seat of the McDowall family and haunt of the bard, *Rabbie Burns*. (Basu 2007 p. 56) I *did* meet the distant relative, who *did* introduce me to the historical and physical landscape. (Basu 2007 p. 58) My thoughts of a Scottish home *did* become refined due to travel. I now envisage a Scottish home not as Scotland itself, but as the town of Haddington, home of the Cranston family, and the small Ayrshire townships where my paternal grandfather was born and raised. (Basu 2007 p. 93) This is all as Basu suggests. Basu could have written *Highland Homecomings* for me.



Figure 3 Roslyn Meeker *Pilgrimage I (Tyneside) (Second state)* 2015 22 x 11.5cm Photopolymer Etching

Here in Australia, Scottish culture endures. Much of it hinges on music, arts and crafts, and storytelling. Paul Basu describes the imagined landscapes conceived by the children and grandchildren of the Scottish migrant population as ‘imagineering.’<sup>1</sup> The word refers to a strategy for the Scottish diaspora to identify with Scotland. My sister paints ceramics, often with Scottish motif and landscape, she scrapbooks, and she records family history. One brother makes bodhrans and tippers, small hand held drums played with a small stick called a tipper and he enjoys any opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> Imagineering is a portmanteau first used by Union Carbide and long used by Disney studios. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt\\_Disney\\_Imagineering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Disney_Imagineering)>

sing a song or spin a yarn. The other brother imagines lineage through the Scottish kings, back to the original Ayrshire residents. Such is the power of ‘imagineering.’ Some cousins play in pipe bands; others play fiddle tunes. While I have busied myself with my own ‘imagineering’, cousin Stuart has written a novel, *Blood on the Thistle*<sup>2</sup>, based on the Cranston family story, a saga that sees only one original member of ‘the big family’ still resident in Scotland by the early 1920s. In the words of the *East Lothian News*, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2011:

More than 90 years ago the Cranston family of Haddington sent seven boys off to fight for Britain in the First World War...Sadly four sons were killed and two more were horrifically wounded. Only one lad returned from war unscathed. According to the Imperial War Museum and the Scottish National War Memorial this may rank as one of the most significant sacrifices made by a Scottish family in the Great War.  
(*East Lothian News* 2011)

In June 2014 to honour the Cranston family members who served in WWI a memorial was unveiled in the John Gray Centre in Haddington, Scotland. Cousin Stuart Pearson, the novelist, lobbied hard, with support of family and friends, for this to come to pass. The town and the country authorities agreed that it should ‘take the form of a three-dimensional bronze plaque’ and furthermore, the concept that pleased them most was that of a ‘female weeping at receiving a death notice’ and that this female should ‘represent every mother, wife, sister, daughter or lover whose life was altered by the news of her man’s death or wounding at the front.’<sup>3</sup> It took some time for me to warm to this generic depiction that smacked of Scottish Romanticism. I worried whether it would be judged overly sentimental, but this, if any story, deserves the sentiment, hence I found myself unable to suggest an alternative. I am thoroughly torn by the tragic historic narrative and I too find the Romanticism alluring. My heart tells me I would have preferred something more authentic, but that function will be served by artefacts in the Cranston collection. The ascribed form of memorial however will be readily understood by museum patrons, the present generation of Cranston’s and future generations ‘on pilgrimage.’

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Mitchell, a Haddington resident and history enthusiast, came on board during the writing of *Blood on the Thistle* as co-writer primarily, I was told, in assisting to make accurate local geography, custom and dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> Official Request for Proposal for Cranston memorial plaque circulated by East Lothian Council, Scotland, June 2012





Figure 4 Cranston Memorial plaque unveiled 2/6/2014 Haddington, Scotland. Image by the author.



Figure 5 Roslyn Meeker 'The Big Family' (The Cranston Family of Haddington) 2015 28 x 20cm Photopolymer etching

My own response often acts as memorial, in the same way perhaps as my cousin's novel, as my sister's collations, or the bronze installed in Haddington.

My attachment with Scottish Romanticism may be consistent with the visual tastes of the diaspora, but it is not everyone's cup of tea. In a review of Landseer's 2005 Edinburgh retrospective, *Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands*, Richard

Dorment, art critic for the Daily Telegraph, tried to quantify the political incorrectness of Landseer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Landseer's work is condemned for being overly sentimental. The brutal hunt based works of Landseer are shunned by animal lovers and activists alike. Present day historians accuse him for not engaging with the Highland Clearances as subject matter as the clearances occurred concurrently with Landseer's Caledonian body of work. Dorment asks that we compare Landseer to Delacroix and judge him on his large scale Highland works and not his 'silly pictures in which comical dogs wear bonnets and smoke pipes.' (Dorment 2005) Dorment does however engage with animal sentimentality enough to comment that when he looks at *The Old Shepherds Chief Mourner* he finds 'the emotion expressed in it true and without false note.' (Dorment 2005)



Figure 6 Roslyn Meeker *Homecoming III* (Second state) 2015  
(Appropriating detail from Sir Edwin Landseer's 1837 work *The Old Shepherds Chief Mourner*)  
Photopolymer etching. 29 x 20.5cm

Landseer is also admonished by the Scottish Nationalists for his ‘collusion’ in the *Tartanisation* of Scotland. Vacationing at Balmoral Castle with Queen Victoria each summer, Englishman Landseer, according to Dormant, created ‘the image of the country that never existed, one with phoney ‘traditions’ of pipers and kilts, and an ersatz history featuring chivalrous nobles and a poor but happy peasantry.’ (Dormant 2005)

Some present day Scottish Nationalists feel that unless Scotland moves past dependence on Romantic imagery then it will not grow up as a country, to find a place in the modern world, but remain forever committed to a sort of ‘Brigadoon-ness’.<sup>4</sup> Basu quotes Magnus Linkletter as saying, ‘I suggest that Scotland will only be a modern nation again when the last visitor centre is smothered by the last tea towel design of the *Declaration of Arbroath*.’ (Basu 2007 p. 19)<sup>5</sup> Yet Basu goes to some length in explaining the dependence on tourist dollars that sees the continuance in this imagery to attract diasporic pilgrims.

Like the Scottish Romanticists I use the presence of animals in many of my own works to picture myth, metaphor and identity. According to Harriet Ritvo, nineteenth century Britain ‘was well supplied with animals who might, from one perspective or another, claim magnificence,’ and these animal motifs act metaphorically or metonymically. (Ritvo 1992 p.1) She discusses *Cadyow Castle*, a poem by Sir Walter Scott, in which is contained a tale of the hunting of a wild Scottish bull. Scott describes the animal as the ‘*Mightiest of all the beasts of chase, That roam in mighty Caledon*’. (Ritvo 1992 p. 2) Ritvo says that by 1801 when Scott penned the poem, the wild cattle of Cadyow had, in fact, already disappeared some centuries before. Although Scott had visited the estate before putting pen to paper, thus knowing the ground, he could only imagine the beast that tossed ‘*high his mane of snow*.’ Once myth and legend, by 1809 Ritvo suggests the park had been restocked with ‘wild cattle.’ In 1836 a young Edwin Landseer exhibited *Death of a Wild Bull* at the Royal Academy annual show. (Ritvo 1992 p. 3) By latter Victorian times this

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<sup>4</sup> *Brigadoon* was a stage show (1947) and a movie (1954). The scene is set in *Brigadoon*, a magical Scottish Highland town, trapped in time.

<sup>5</sup> *The Declaration of Arbroath* is commemorated **outside** Scotland, principally as *National Tartan Day* in the United States of America.



subject matter of wild cattle seems very well explored, available widely to the masses through etchings and engravings.

As I worked on the *Familiar Ground* project, I was often taken back to childhood, to the tobacco stained engravings of Scottish landscape, hung by wire from the plate rails in the hallway of the *Barrhill* home. There I found the starting place both in imagining the Scottish homeland and the art of printmaking. The idea of this wall has many times proven to be beginning for collage construction. Indeed, many of the works play with this idea alone.<sup>6</sup> The re-dressing of this wall with Victorian or Edwardian wallpaper provides a background to the work and creates a stage for a visual conversation on Scottish Romanticism via appropriation, remediation and *détournement*. Some of the ‘turnabout’ in meaning is planned, sometimes it emerges, but all turnabouts occur during selection of the visual components.



Figure 7 Interior of *Barrhill* home Pymble NSW 2008 Image by author with the kind permission of the current owners, Mr & Mrs Adrian Grundy

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. The series of small miniatures, ‘*The Patches*’

In my work botanical references in wallpapers, soft furnishings or domestic china may take on a new life to form a new, albeit unlikely, ground. Interiors and exteriors become confused. The horizontal plane – what were skirting rails, a plate rail or sometimes a dado – collapses in many compositions. In this manner false horizons are created. In her essay *In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective*, film maker, artist and author Hito Steyerl discusses the postmodern perspective as something ‘distinguished by a prevailing condition of groundlessness.’ She likens this to the state of free fall, where confusion is triggered ‘between the self and the aircraft,’ into a condition where perspectives distort and multiply, shattering the senses. She says, ‘We cannot assume any stable ground on which to base metaphysical claims or foundational myths’, and instead we make temporary ‘partial attempts at grounding.’ (Steyerl 2011) Steyerl’s discussion of disorientation and the loss of a stable horizon has much relevance for my methodology. Certainly her description of the vantage point taken by ‘an imaginary floating observer and an imaginary stable ground’ (Steyerl 2011) is an effective way of describing what a viewer of my *Familiar Ground* suite has to negotiate. Analytically, my reading of Steyerl alerted me to the fact that my works are as much about groundlessness as they are about ground, and that the perspective shifts I make go to reinforcing the idea of displacement and diaspora.

There is melancholy and a certain blackness to much of the *Familiar Ground* suite. This derives from my own personal struggle with depression and a family medical history dotted with grief and madness.<sup>7</sup> It is also part of the generalised melancholy of the diasporic condition. In *Melancholy as an Aesthetic Emotion*, Brady claims that melancholy has special characteristics, differentiating it from ‘sadness, sorrow, despair, and depression, and distinguishing it as an aesthetic emotion.’ (Brady 2003) Many of Brady’s points I keenly relate to, but although she goes to some length to justify the differences between melancholy from sadness and depression, I find the arguments hard to accept. She questions the theorist Julia Kristeva, in whose view there is a composite state of melancholy and depression, ‘whose borders are in fact blurred.’ (Brady 2003) Kristeva’s position is closer to my own. Brady declares a difference between the depressive and the aesthetic melancholic, saying that the

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<sup>7</sup> The eventual madness of my great grandmother Elizabeth Cranston, unable to contain the grief at the loss of her sons, is well documented and was used by many journalists as a lead in to the Cranston Homecoming story.

depressed are unmotivated and cannot complete tasks at hand, yet I don't think I am alone in being quite productive in times of severe depression. Brady notes that melancholy is reflective and, often, 'indirectly experienced through memories, thoughts or imaginings related to an absent object.' (Brady 2003) She says that it is imagination that makes us connect our present to past, and connects 'a Scottish landscape to the sound of bagpipes,' that it assists in 'imagining our return to some place.' (Brady 2003) That we do not resort to tears is a particular condition of Brady's description of melancholia, which she describes as an 'educative emotion.' It is not so with myself. Perhaps I am as enmeshed in my story as I am in depression, or perhaps Brady's theory sits uneasily with my condition. What does ring true is the description of melancholy as a 'mature, reflective emotion' (Brady 2003) which operates as a coping mechanism.

Brady's discussion of the qualities of the sublime and the melancholic are pertinent to my research. She posits that both are reflective, both have positive and negative aspects, and 'rhythms of pleasure.' (Brady 2003) Moreover, she suggests that with the sublime, the cause is nature while with melancholy, nature is an evocation; a 'desolate moor' or a 'gloomy ocean' may provoke either response. (Brady 2003) I see that in my images both qualities – the sublime in nature and nostalgic tropes are used repeatedly – not purely for irony but for remembrance, whimsy, for comfort and solace.

In studio critique sessions, some saw a comic quality to my prints. One of my purposes is to question and to celebrate my cultural heritage, and if some works are more light-hearted or grim than others I feel no concern. In Andre Breton's *Anthology of Dark Humour*, he suggests that black humour, 'partly macabre and partly ironic', is the 'mortal enemy of sentimentality' and involves 'a superior revolt of the mind.' (Breton 1997 p. vi) I find others ideas plausible in regards to my humour, such as this notion by Don Watson from his book *Caledonis Australis*:

A century after these ancestors of mine ventured into the forest with saws and axes and cut down their first hundred-metre-high mountain ash the shape of my cultural inheritance became clearer to me. The gist of this inheritance seemed to comprise a work ethic and a sense of irony, yoked together like two draught horses – or two

brothers, or husband and wife, or father and son – one grunting and cursing as he labours the other making grim jokes through clenched teeth. (Watson 1997 p. xv)

My grim jokes are visual ones. The most likely explanation for this aspect of my work, to my mind, harks back to the cultural inheritance of storytelling, the ‘humour’, I contend, is just part of the substance to the story told. Historically, Scottish culture was passed down in oral form. In the case of my close family, it was passed down through the grandfather, who quoted Burns, to the father who sang by the piano.

Such skills were generally learnt at the Ceilidh, the peculiar Celtic gathering. Ceilidhs expressed and maintained Celtic culture through music, song, poetry, saga and folk tales. They fostered arts and the most valuable social skills-retentive memories, fluency of composition, sureness and correctness of speech. (Watson 1997 p. 7)

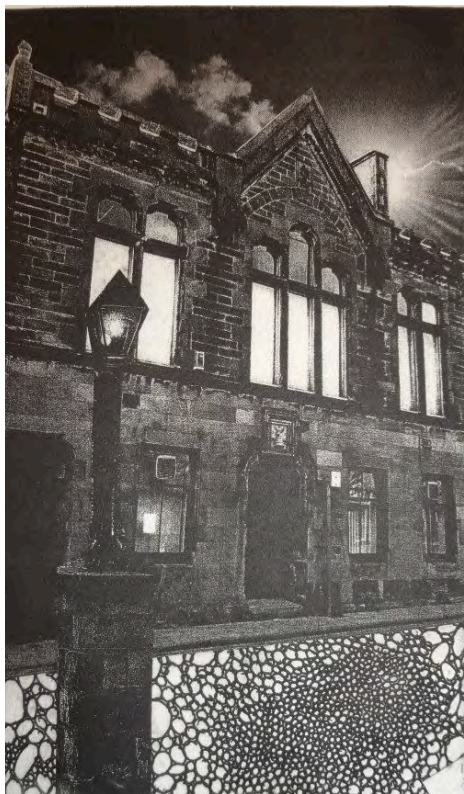


Figure 8: Roslyn Meeker *Ceilidh*, 2013 First state, Photopolymer etching, 20.5 x 12cm.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The building pictured in *Ceilidh* is the Forester's Hall in Haddington, venue for my grandparent's wedding.

Applying Paul Basu's term, 'imagineering', to my collage processes has been useful for reflecting on my methods of pictorial construction and composition. Basu discusses at length the domestic display of material culture representing homeland, describing it as 'performing Scottishness in the diaspora.' (Basu 2007 p.42) Basu predicted that as I became more informed I would discard the trappings of 'tartanry'. (Basu 2007 p.93) Tartanry is a modern derogative term that applies to 'the excessive use of tartan and other Scottish imagery to produce a distorted sentimental view of Scotland and its history', according to the Collins English Dictionary. Wikipedia purports that the term Tartanry is used to describe 'the kitsch elements of Scottish culture.' Basu thought that as my project progressed, I would select a more refined set of pictorial symbols. At the time I wondered how this could be so. The texture, the 'feel' of tartan cloth and coarse tweeds, the image of the resilient prickly thistle, the memory of droning pipes and the allure of artefacts was inherent and motivational. This is the language of Tartanry. It was what my childhood was steeped in and I had figured it would be central to my image making. I became increasingly aware if a visual element was an example of Tartanry (kitsch) or Scottishry (the authentic.) Ultimately, I chose not to discard Tartanry as it IS the visual language used and understood by my diasporic demographic.

To accompany, her doctoral thesis on *Multiculturalism and Identity*, Karen Lunn wrote in her exegesis of key concerns of identity, memory and fetishism. My research project has similarities to hers, insofar as both resort to family artefact/souvenir as sources for exploring immigrant experience. Not in relation to Scottish identity, but describing a process like that which Basu refers to as 'imagineering', Lunn declares, 'With an incomplete representation of the homeland, I have no choice but to fill in the gaps my father's souvenirs leave, creating an imagined totality rather than a factual construction of the past.' (Lunn 2004 p.45)

Initially, one focus of my survey for contextual artists was to look for what might constitute 'Scottish Romanticism.' I found generally published texts in compendiums of British art, and I scanned, filtered and collate them to sort the English, Irish and Welsh from the Scots. I found there was often no clear distinction to be made between them. Prominent Scottish artists such as John and Thomas Faed, associated with the British Academy, and English artists such as Sir Edwin Landseer worked

extensively in Scotland. I searched for *Claudian* inspired landscapes of sublime moments in landscape. I looked for large history paintings. It was easier for me to reel off the string of authors to fit the bill, the 'learnt by rote' poetry of Robert Burns, to the stories of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. The lyrics from composers such as Lady Nairne spill easily from me. Yet, on reflection, I found my knowledge of the 'fine art' of Scotland was gleaned more from the mass produced engravings that graced the hallways, illustrations in novels, the decoration on household items and the shortbread tins that appeared every Christmas and New Year.

I travelled to Scotland in May 2014 with my 66 year old sister, her husband, and my 70 year old brother, principally to attend the Cranston reunion. It was my second trip 'home.' We were not just 'normal' tourists, we were genealogical pilgrims on a quest to explore our past and connect it to our present.<sup>9</sup> Our demographic was that of 'heritage tourists.' We more or less conformed to the Scottish Tourist Board's market research for the 'genealogy niche market' i.e. 'Australian White Collar Affluents' (sophisticated "baby boomers" aged between 45 and 70 from urban, East Coast or Western Australia, the empty nesters", travelling in couples, whose children have left home.)' (Basu 2007 p. 39)

We visited the small towns in Ayrshire and East Lothian where my grandparents and their kin once resided, travelling outside the areas usually flocked to by tourists; those major tourist destinations such as Loch Ness or Loch Lomond, Glencoe or Culloden.<sup>10</sup> We experienced the sublime atmospheric landscape and welcome of the highlands. We experienced the sight of sunset over the western isles. In Haddington we were overwhelmed by the feeling of being on *familiar ground* as we met with other descendants of Elizabeth and William Cranston, from Australia and Canada, from Haddington and nearby villages. During a three-day program of events we commemorated our pasts and celebrated the present. As Urry speculates, "There is no

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<sup>9</sup> Basu notes that many of his survey respondents speak about travelling into the past. (Basu 2007 p. 47, 53)

<sup>10</sup> Basu asked his respondents to name the places in their itinerary. When analysing the data he realised that a pattern had emerged where the majority of places appeared infrequently. 63% of places appeared in only one list. These represented the genealogical aspect of 'hunting home.' He notes these are specific journeys to very specific places and those on a second or subsequent tour will have honed out an even more specific itinerary. (Basu 2007 p. 52)

single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference' (Urry 1990 p.1) and I became very aware of the constant random shifts of gaze during my tour, from tourist, to family member, to academic, to artist. My camera recorded the images typical of normal family holiday snaps and also those which offered any connection to the family's past. I took photographs of my own feet on the path I trod, provoked by the textures encountered in the threshold experience, opening a new door to be greeted by tartan broadloom or terrazzo, turning off a path to be greeted by bluebells underfoot. I paused on finding these native wildflowers known from plantings in the *Barrhill* garden, my parent's Sydney garden, or my own cottage garden in Tasmania. Part of that photographic record was incorporated into part of submission in a suite entitled *Field Research*, the making of such will also be discussed in the following chapter.

Aside from viewing Scotland through my imagination and through my physical presence in 2014, my gaze toward Scotland was most commonly virtual in nature, via satellite connection through the internet. The internet has been a vital adjunct to my diasporic research. In *Highland Homecomings* Basu discussed the internet in regard to the diaspora, seeing it as a place of genealogical research, diasporic consciousness and virtual communities. He saw 'home pages' as metaphors, and he scrutinised the imagery on internet sites set up to cater for the diaspora. Over the course of this research, the internet not only aided in providing me with online texts or the convenience of arranging from the comfort of my own home to have them at the library waiting, but through Facebook I have felt connected to Scotland each and every day, through groups such as *Scotland from the Roadside*, *Lost Haddington*, *Beautiful Edinburgh*, *Scottish Memories*. Post the Cranston reunion I am connected to once-lost family in Canada, Scotland and Australia, their updates happening in a way that my grandmother could not have dreamed possible.

Though often prompted by botanical and landscape references from Victorian and Edwardian interiors, the *Familiar Ground* suite seeks to depict an amalgam of physical ground and psychological landscape. The act of imagining a homeland makes this a study of identity. By imagining the homeland through a shared but mostly unchanged cultural inheritance – music, storytelling and literature, high and

low art forms and domestic decoration – various terms are held in common within the diaspora which are in some cases at odds to those of resident Scots.

The *Familiar Ground* suite reflects my position, of viewing the past through lenses of nostalgia, romanticism, diaspora and loss, even when confronted with the physical nature of Scotland when on pilgrimage. In the next chapter, ‘Imagineering, Collage and Print,’ I will discuss the rationale for my use of collage for imagineering the fragments of the past.



## CHAPTER 2. IMAGINEERING, COLLAGE AND PRINT

This chapter discusses the collage logic of the images that were made in the course of this research project; what provoked them, their composition and construction, and the way they were processed in the studio. I have not discussed all the works, rather a representative cross section.

A similar approach was taken in starting all the works produced, in that the first phase was collecting or appropriating. The collage components, photocopies and digital printouts, were sourced widely from library and internet searches, family archives, journals, books and my own collections and photography. These components comprise a mixture of diverse traditional imagery as well as textures and contrasts.

Hand drawn or painted marks were produced for incorporation into the works too, on watercolour paper, including laying in wet-on-wet in paint or ink, gradations in tone with lithography crayon, cross hatch in felt tip or pencil and so forth. These exercises were often magnified many times over on a photocopier until the marks began to break up. Sometimes I homed in on some interesting form or gesture. By incorporating these gestures into collages, the resultant printed images, in part emulate the look of lithography or traditional etching, thus conveying an homage to the art of printmaking. As this process relies on its photographic nature, the pursuit of high contrast was always part of the selection process.

I collected components based on my attraction to subject matter, textures, or the alluring fine detail that the photopolymer plates and the soft ground etch capture so well. I'd say that the collages 'made themselves' but this is a simplistic statement. On one level there is an automatist engagement with the work. Yet, on another level, I was critical with my placements, aware of concepts and the developing conversation and narrative. The compositions I settled on are improbable, but also somewhat convincing in their spatial arrangements and scale. I chose to leave enough visual clues for the viewer to be fully aware that the image is derived from collage, but strove for it to contain enough cohesiveness for the image to carry some authority in its new form. I regarded collage as part of my process inside a printmaking project.

The collages were a means to an end. The print was the final and most important destination. Much later collage took on a more traditional role in the *Field Research* installation.

The etched works in the *Familiar Ground* suite were mostly worked on photogravure quality photopolymer plates. Five steel plates with soft ground workings applied and two with simple hand drawn elements were also produced. The soft ground botanical components were found in the garden and forest that encircle my home. The impression of one piece of nylon continuous curtaining was etched in steel and used to suggest Victorian wallpaper.

The work on the photopolymer plates commenced with collages made from pieces of paper, shaped by scissors, and pasted to a ground. These compositions were sometimes further worked into with black and white felt tip pens or brush. When complete the images were transferred to acetates and exposed to the plate. Although there was some experimentation in exposure times most were exposed to manufacturer's specification, including exposure to half-tone dot screen.

Some works responded to the familiarities between the Tasmanian physical landscape and that of the Caledonian. My personal search for the 'romantic sublime' in Tasmania comprises, in part, hundreds of photographs taken of light and weather on the highland ridge that can be seen from my living room situated in Snug Tiers, 30 minutes from Hobart. Fragments of these skylscapes and landscapes were used as collage resource. Sometimes my collages were prompted by a simple imagined shift in the view from my desk. Sometimes they were prompted by a phrase, poem, story or song. Imagining the smoke stained wallpaper and engravings of Scottish landscape that hung in the hallway at Barrhill proved to be the most common and pertinent prompt. Some miniatures rely on nothing more than the idea of re-wallpapering to find more textures and to reveal more landscape, and are no more than a visual play with my process.



Figs 9-11 Roslyn Meeker Three examples from the series 'the patches' 7 x 7cm 2014/15 Photopolymer etchings

The medium of collage is well suited to my exploration into family heritage and my relationship with a Scottish homeland, my 'invention of past,' my reconstruction of the past through fragments. I have no complete picture from which I can work.

Collage itself operates as metaphor. Christopher Johnston writes that when seen at the simplest level bricolage is a 'technical metaphor for a cognitive and creative process: the composition and generation of mythical discourse.' (Johnson 2012) A 'bricoleur' to Janine Mileaf is a dealer in signs and mythical thought. In a discussion about Claude Levi-Strauss's work *Science of the Concrete* she writes that 'bricoler' [sic], a French word with no English equivalent, roughly translates to 'the kind of activities that are performed by a handy-man', who achieves these tasks with what is at hand, what Levi-Strauss describes as 'odds and ends' or what I might describe as fragments or components.' (Milief)



Fig 12 Left: Collage components during sorting process



Fig 13 Right: Roslyn Meeker *Southern Circles* (Second state) 2015 29 x 20.5cm Photopolymer etching

In my construction of collages and rendering of image onto plate, I was mindful of the limitations of photopolymer as a medium and I undertook much technical experimentation to overcome the tonal restriction inherent to it. As American printmaker Kevin Haas comments, 'The tendency for these plates is to lose information in the areas lighter than 20% gray and darker than 80% gray.' (Haas) I endeavour to correct for the tonal drop out during the collage stage of process, by arranging strong tonal contrast in the preliminary composition. By incorporating black on white ideals of traditional printmaking into the photopolymer medium I could seek and discern the widest tonal range and the best blacks. For the most part, if I did add any colour it was a restrained application of watercolour. Nonetheless, the strong tonal matter must be present on the plate for it to be printed and so it is of benefit to work the original collage in black, greys and white.

Despite the tonal challenges, the medium suited my ends. In *Printmaking with Photopolymer Plates*, Dianne Longley discusses the diverse range of images that can be produced with these plates. She pinpoints 'drawings on film, photographs, photocopies, collages, digital images and even found objects' as having great potential for artists using the media. She further observes that the plates replicate



both image and text well, making them suitable for the translation of ‘historical photographs, family letters and various memorabilia,’ onto archival paper. (Longley 1998 p. 12)

My intent was to make nostalgic work, and the photomontage qualities of my prints connect readily to past times. I looked to Peter Milton who produces rich blacks and silvery greys on white paper, choosing to follow traditional ideals in opposition to most modern printmaking that stress the use of colour. In Peter Milton *Complete Prints 1960-1996*, Robert Flynn Johnson likens Milton’s photogravure prints to black and white photos finding associations between them and the aura found in old photographs. (Milton 1996 p. 5)

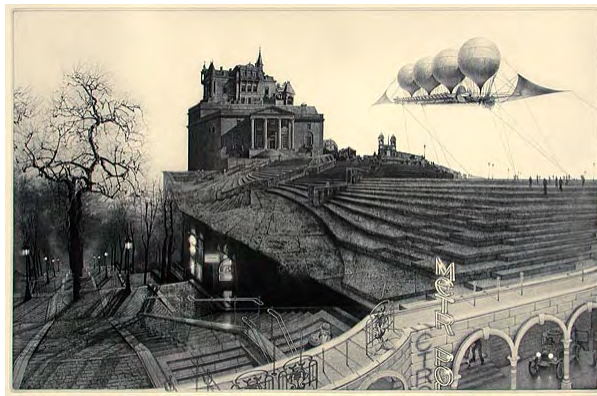


Fig 14 Peter Milton 2004 *Hidden Cities II: Embarkation for Cythera* Etching/Engraving. Image source:< <http://www.amazon.com/Hidden-Cities-II-Embarkation-Cythera/dp/BooDT52CBS>>

Fig 15 Rod Ewins 1983 *The residence III (The Way It Was)* Image Source: Australian Printmakers p.21

Quite a diverse range of artists played some contextual role in the studio. I commenced making while thinking about the haunting qualities of some of the place-based works of Rod Ewins and the imaginary landscapes and animals of Milan Milojevic. I have referred to the work of Monty Python animator Terry Gilliam. I pinned up Banksy. His humorous work *The Cigarette Break*, is a work I kept returning to as I admired the way it appropriates, subverts, creates a new narrative, works with the wall, and plays with the frame by working inside and outside of it. I also spent time examining Mark Tansy’s *The Innocent Eye Test* and considering his use of the metapicture.

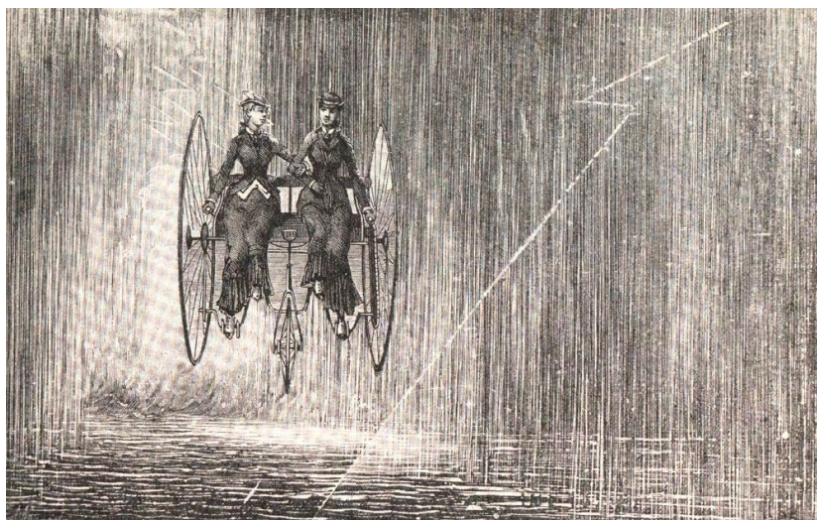


Left: Figure 16 2009 Banksy *Cigarette Break* Image source:

<<https://www.flickr.com/photos/margaretstranks/3762082479>>

Right: Figure 17 Mark Tansey 1981 *Innocent eye Test* Image source:<

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/484972>>



Bottom left: Fig 18 Max Ernst *Two Young Girl's Promenade Across the Sky*, 1920 Collage using wood engravings, Max Ernst DADA | O3 Archive <https://otway.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/me-1920.jpg>

Bottom right: Fig 19 Terry Gilliam 1988 *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* Movie poster

As I continued with my research, the works of Surrealists Max Ernst and Rene Magritte took more of my attention with both influencing my pursuit of the absurd as a strategy in my work. Ernst in particular also informed my incorporation of collage as a key process and I responded by seeking collage components that emulated the engraved line and textural qualities found in such works as *Two Young Girls Promenade Across the Sky*. (Fig 18)

Magritte's influence was often compositional as I was drawn to his use of framed works inside his paintings, his type of 'metapicturing,' and I too worked this way embedding framed works, new and old, into my own etchings. I also boldly appropriated the major element of Magritte's *The Castle of the Pyrenees* for my



Victorian fantasy, *Rock, Paper, Scissors (Tayside)*. In my work Magritte's rock hangs on the surface of the paper. It is topped by a cropped photograph of the Tayside Inn in Dunkeld, Scotland, and underscored with a flight of Victorian ornamental scissors, that resemble storks, or prehistoric monsters, or flying plaster ducks upon a wall. Both my work and Magritte's original defy gravity and logic. My 'turnabout' possibly more black and threatening in its visual narrative but tempered by the title revealing it to be a visual pun.

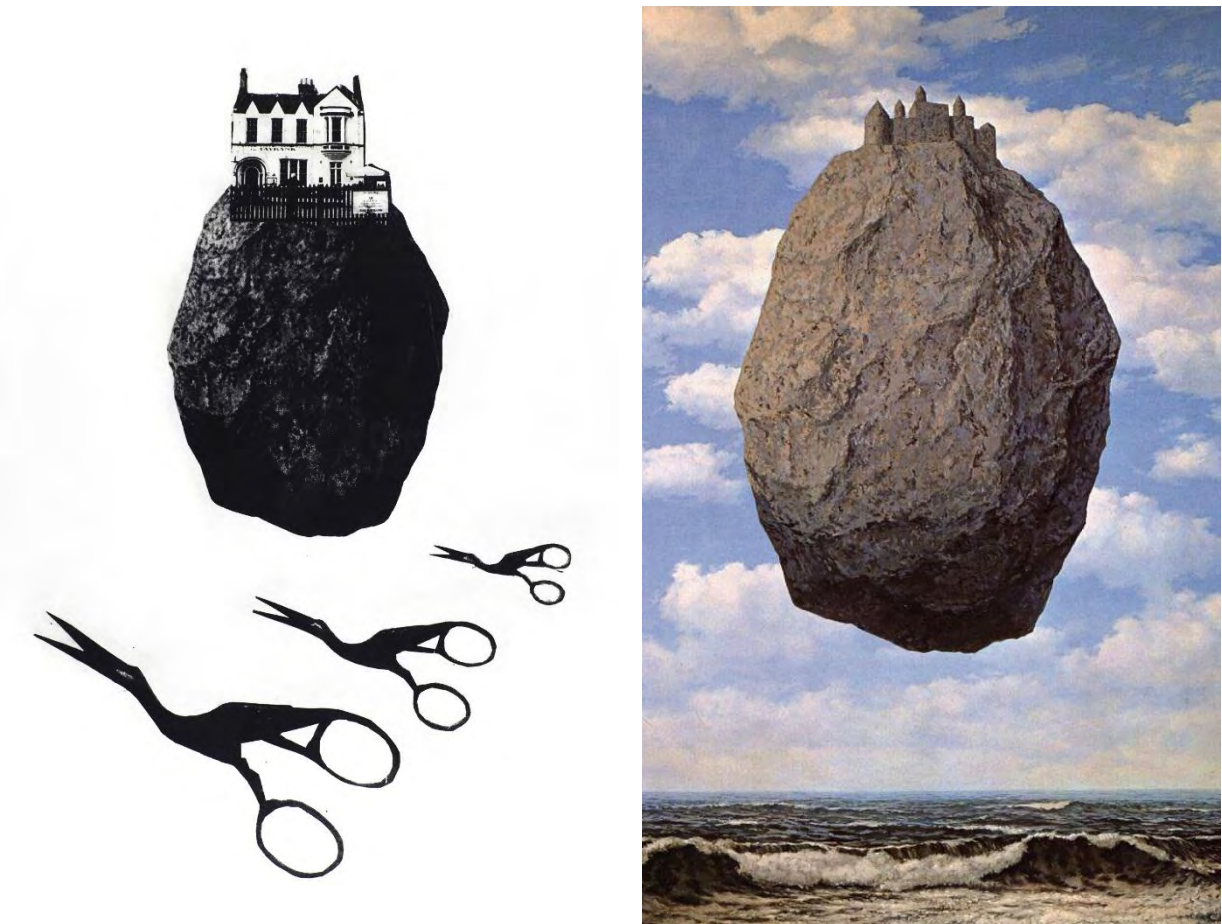


Figure 20 Roslyn Meeker *Rock, Paper, Scissors (Tayside)* 2015 Photopolymer etching, 28 x 20cm  
 Figure 21 Rene Magritte *The Castle of the Pyrenees* 1959 600 x 955 Image source:  
<http://www.renemagritte.org/images/paintings/the-castle-of-the-pyrenees.jpg>

Although I have not cited Robert Rauschenberg's work directly, Leo Steinberg's writing in *Other Criteria* pinpoints relevant methodology in his essay 'The Flatbed Picture Plane.' The term was coined to describe works that operated on a 'horizontal bed on which a horizontal printing surface rests.' (Steinberg 1972 in Harrison and Wood, p. 972) Steinberg says that 'it seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work

surface stood for the mind itself – a dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in internal monologue.’ (Steinberg 1972 in Harrison and Wood, p. 974) Steinberg adds that Rauschenberg’s picture plane became ‘a surface to which anything reachable would appear’ (ibid) on the condition that it would ‘bed itself down on the work surface.’ (Steinberg 1972 in Harrison and Wood, p. 975) This is very much how my work operates and like Rauschenberg at times my work also fails to ‘affirm verticality.’ (Steinberg 1972 in Harrison and Wood, p. 972)



Figure 22 Example of work sought for the purposes of appropriation.  
 "Th' expectant wee things, toddlin, stacher thro'"  
 engraving by William Miller after John Faed,  
 from *The Cotter's Saturday Night* ( after the poem by Robert Burns), Royal Association for the  
 Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, 1853  
 Source: <<http://atouchofculture.blogspot.com.au/2010/10/no4.html>>

Works of art I appropriated from 19th century Scottish painters and engravers operate both as influence and ‘target’, as it is these original sources that convey clues to cultural identity. These components of Scottish Romanticism and Victoriana aid the adoption of the tropes of nostalgia and the Sublime, myth and metaphor. In *Improvement and Romance* Peter Womack writes:

We know that the highlands of Scotland are romantic. Bens and glens, the lone sheiling in the misty island, purple heather, kilted clansmen, battles long ago, an ancient and



beautiful language, claymores and bagpipes and Bonny Prince Charlie – we know all that, and we know that it's not real. (Womack 1989 p. 1)

The more I researched the more I realised that I'd been subscribing to a mass delusion with some religiosity. Historically, the fantasy contained in the romanticism took off in the years that followed the Jacobite rebellion. Basu writes, 'motifs of love, loyalty, exile and loss' were coupled with Highland tradition and these became themes well developed in music, literature and art. Foremost in 'Highlandism', in 1822 Sir Walter Scott, organised the 'King's Jaunt.' Visiting Scotland, the English monarch George IV, was turned out in 'kilt, plaid, bonnet and tartan coat' and was presented as 'Chief of chiefs.' Basu claims that Lowland identity was marginalised at this point, and was replaced with 'a Celtic fantasy.' (Basu 2007 p. 18) By the mid-1800s, as has been mentioned previously, Queen Victoria was spending summer holidays in Balmoral and the 'cult of Highlandism' was in full swing. Gatherings and games, Clan societies and monuments followed, along with the landscaping of Scottish estates in accordance of the aesthetics of the picturesque.' (Basu 2007 p. 18) Many of the components of my collages from this stock of mythical ideals: this stuff that isn't true, but comes to me pre-imagined and accepted as true.

Appropriation has an important function in my work. I make direct quotations of well-known works of art from this 'Celtic fantasy' or 'mass delusion.' In works such as *Homecoming I*, the image of the painting by Edwin Landseer is remediated: it took a long process-driven journey from painting, to photo, to web page, to sketch, to print out, to collage, to acetate, to plate and, finally, to cotton rag paper. As Debord might describe, in *Homecoming I* the détournement is 'extended' with many possible new meanings.



Figure 23 Roslyn Meeker *Homecoming I* (Second state) 2015 (Appropriating Sir Edwin Landseer's 1851 painting *The Monarch of the Glen*), Photopolymer etching, 28 x 20cm

Appropriation was a mainstay of early 20th century visual art, figuring in photomontage and the ready-made. Using 'imagery, ideas or materials from pre-existing works of art or culture', appropriation is an 'act', one 'typically deployed to call attention to either the source material or the act of borrowing itself.' (Oxford Art Online 2014) My 'found' components operate as borrowed 'ready-made elements.' As Marcel Duchamp described, they lack uniqueness, 'the replica of a 'readymade,' delivering the same message.' (Duchamp in Evans 2009 p40)

Many of my compositions bear some degree of détournement. Guy Debord wrote at length about détournement as one form of 'critical appropriation,' using the term to describe a diversion, a 'turn around', a hi-jack in meaning. (Welchman 2001) Two types of détournement were described. The first, the minor détournement, involved an element that had 'no importance itself' but drew its meaning from the new context. The second, the deceptive or premonitory proposition détournement,

involved an ‘intrinsically significant element which derives a different scope from the new context.’ This creates the possibility of ‘extended détourned works’, being those that are those composed of ‘one or more sequences’ of either type. (Debord in Evans 2009 p. 35)

In *Reusing Culture: the Import Of Detournement*, Astrid Vicas argues that perhaps the most notable aspect of contemporary culture is ‘the enhancement in the pace and scope of cultural production and diffusion that the use of readily available cultural production material makes possible.’ (Vicas 1999) The ‘cultural production material’ to appropriate is readily found as nowadays most of what I seek is but a click away via a search engine with my searches refined to find exactly the right component.

In *The Aesthetics of Diaspora: Ownership and Appropriation*, authors Pnina Werbner and Mattia Fumanti make claim that ‘diasporic sociality and aesthetic cultural performance create the grounds for appropriation and ownership’. They propose that that there are ‘shared canons of taste’ amongst the ‘diasporic producers and consumers.’ (Werbner & Fumanti 2012) In the areas of cultural and postcolonial studies, Werbner and Fumanti note that conversation so far has mostly concentrated on higher art forms and not such as kitsch. (Werbner & Fumanti 2012) I write more about this link between diaspora and appropriation in Chapter Three, Imagery of Identity. Ever cognisant of Scottishry and tartanry, my collages appropriate from ‘higher’ art forms, kitsch and the everyday.

Scottish romantic imagery infiltrated not only on the walls of my parents’ and grandparents’ homes, but also decorated everyday items such as tablecloths, tea towels and chinaware. Heather and thistle were omnipresent as decorative motif, as were various distinct tartans. By way of example my grandfather wore a MacDougall tie respecting family connections. My father would wear his regimental tartan, the Black Watch. The teapot also wore Black Watch. Scottishry and tartanry were interchangeable.

Tartanry can also be defined as the overuse of tartan, yet tartans are supposedly representative of place, clan structure and family, and my project is styled as *Familiar Ground*. I realise my own views are confused. On one hand they are

affected by my childhood through the passed down knowledge that my father gained as a Dress judge at Highland gatherings. This is at variance with the way tartan is worn nowadays internationally, for example the traditional tartans, appropriated and subverted by punk culture and Japanese schoolgirls, and the overly bright tartans seen in the Caribbean and some African cultures. When selecting tartan for collage I look for those with a strong tonal pattern that will translate well when rendered to black and white, as the greens and reds of the McDougall tartan read as similar tone and details of the Black Watch are veiled in obscure blackness.

I include other textiles associated with Scottish culture too, such as tatting, Fair Isle, cable stitching and homespun yarns. I incorporate them into my work, frequently as background and landscapes. This is boldly executed in works such as *What to Wear* and *Landscape (with Buttons)* but still figured in *There & Back II* in which a small boat returns from a re-landscaped Threave Castle across a river made out of knitted cabled pattern dragged through the photocopier.

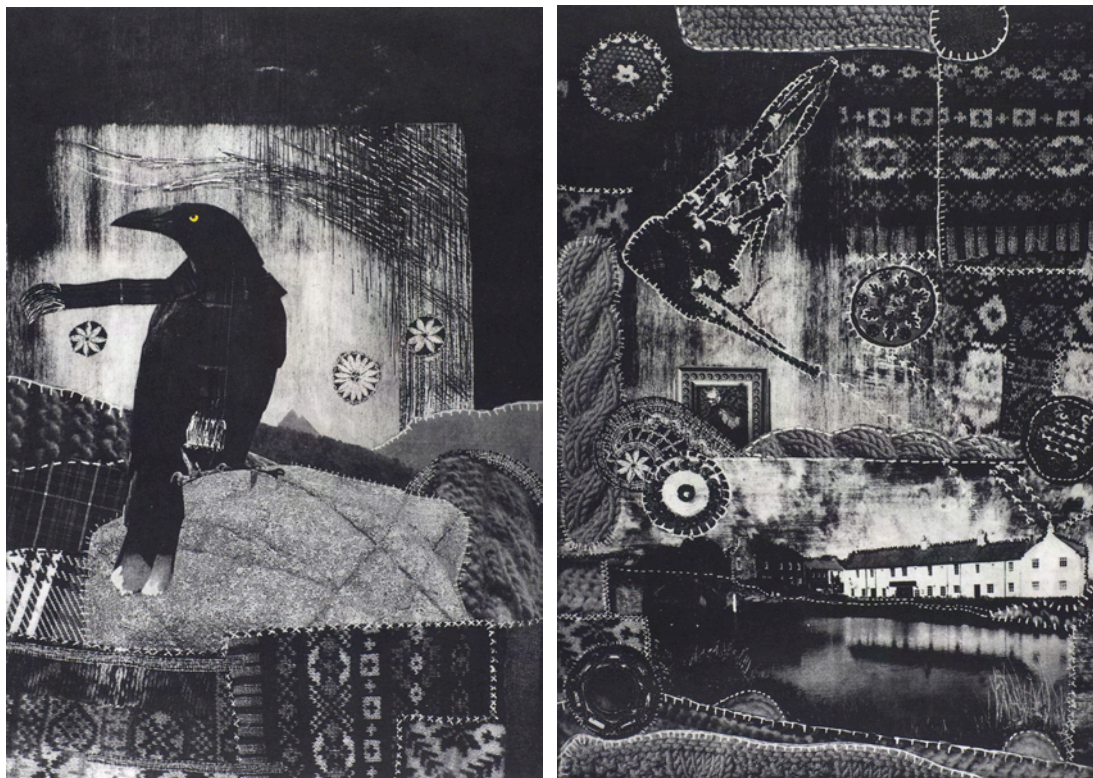


Figure 24 Roslyn Meeker *What to Wear* (Second state) 2015 29 x 20.5cm Photopolymer etching, watercolour Figure 25 Roslyn Meeker *Landscape (With Buttons)* (Second state) 2015 29 x 20.5cm Photopolymer etching





Figure 26 Roslyn Meeker *There and Back II* 2015 10cm x 18cm Photopolymer Etching

David Lowenthal in *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* sees an heirloom as something that binds together a ‘chain of caretakers.’ He comments further: ‘[A]n heirloom is, as the name suggests, a device for interweaving generations.’ (Lowenthal 1998 p.31) I have long imagined fabric as a metaphor for genealogy. Old threads expire. New threads are woven in. A piece of magical cloth is woven into the future as it disappears into the past.

The idea of ‘weaving’ a work together is integral to the first state of *Imagineering Metaphors-Tree*. This work commenced with two hand drawn steel etchings. The ‘warp’ was laid down in yellow and the ‘weft’ overlaid in a translucent sanguine wash. By figuring woven lines into the entire background I intended to suggest hand-drawn cross hatching to integrate the next layers printed or collaged:- to ground the weaving of a story.

A Rowan tree I planted next to my house for traditional good luck has grown over the years into the field of vision out of the windows. Its presence can be discerned on the verges of a number of photopolymer etchings. However in *Imagineering Metaphors-*

*Tree* the printed soft ground impressions of European Rowan and Tasmanian Blue Gum merge to take the role of a metaphoric family tree. During installation the tree forms fuse. The work began by 'imagineering metaphors' but by its first hanging it read very much as a work dealing with hybridised identity.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 27 Roslyn Meeker *Imagineering Metaphors-Tree* 2013 Multi-layer steel etching. 1.52 x 1.12m

Another metaphor discussed by Basu is the one of 'dual consciousness,' the experience of 'stasis/movement, past/present, home/away: the notion of diaspora.' (Basu 2007 p. 10) Writing in *Dialogues in the Diasporas* Nikos Papastergiadis also discusses metaphor, in a way that links it to my imagineering:

To see the cultural identity as metaphor is to think of the difference in similitude, and vice versa. With cultural identity as metaphor, the significance of identity is not fixed

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<sup>11</sup> A second and third state of this work was also produced. In the second the tree was imagined 'as interior' and was layered with a piece of plywood that had been etched with caustic soda to better reveal the wood grain, the steel plate that insinuates wallpaper and then the steel plates with rowan and eucalypt. It was further worked with shellac and more metaphor applied with the use of blood red and rich gold ink.

onto a singular track that maps origin and destiny according to primordial and immutable laws. Metaphor stresses the inventiveness in the inventing of one's past. (Papastergiadis 1998 p. 177)

The salmon in *Imagineering Metaphors—Salmon* reference another discussion of metaphorical logic by Basu. To Basu, trees and roots are root metaphors representing genealogy, and salmon are the route metaphor for the diaspora's ancestral pilgrimages, because they always 'return to the source.' He quotes one informant as saying, 'I am not born a salmon but like a salmon long at sea I am drawn to where I was born or whence my kind came.' (Basu 2007 p.xi)

Twenty or so salmon were collaged individually, imagineered to carry with them on their pilgrimage evident markers of identity and place. These appear in two 'poster works' *Imagineering Metaphors—Salmon I & II*, and salmon also appear in other works. The role of myth and metaphor in the Familiar ground works is integral.

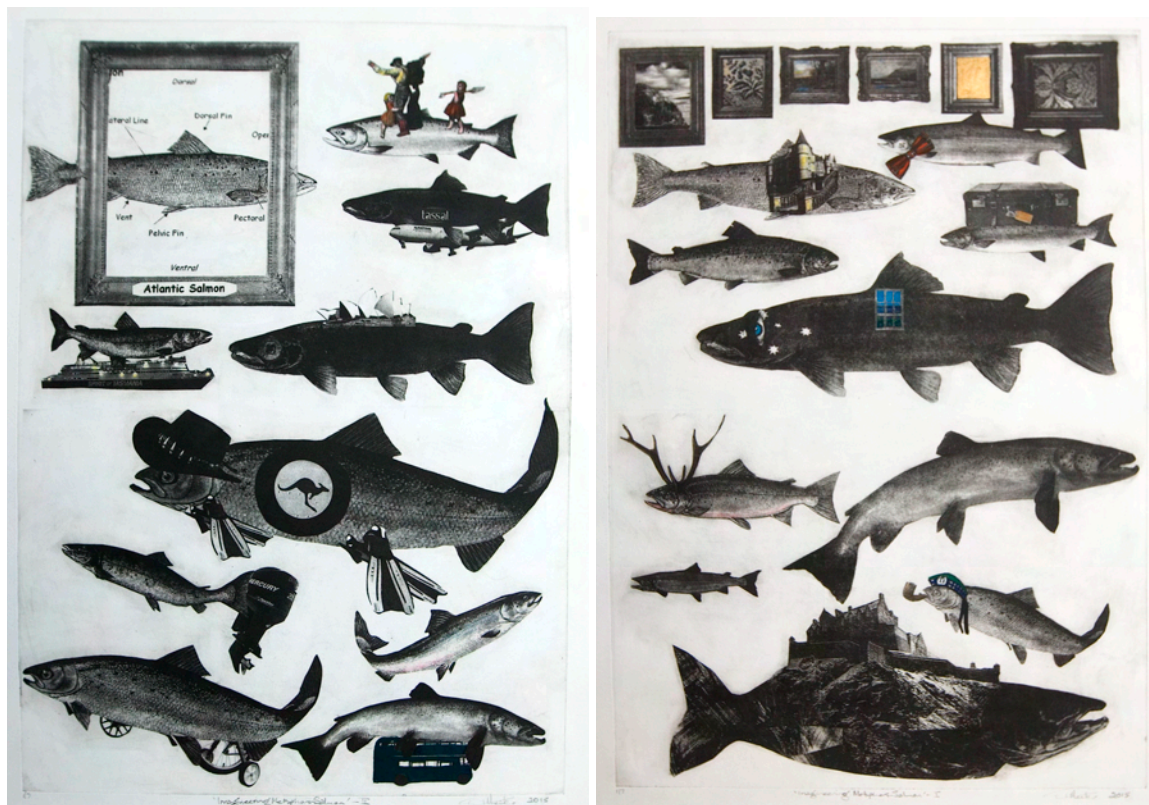


Figure 28 Roslyn Meeker *Imagineering metaphors-Salmon I* 2015 Approx. 42 x 60cm Photopolymer etching, watercolour Figure 29 *Imagineering metaphors-Salmon II* 2015 Approx. 42 x 60cm Photopolymer etching, watercolour, ink

I have tried in some works to imagineer through the eyes of my grandparents, in an attempt to envision life in Sydney in the early twentieth century. Here Scottish



Romanticism gives way to empire building as my subject matter. Motivated by childhood in Sydney, stories and nostalgia for the past, *Views I & II*, *There & Back II*, remember my grandfather, the stonemason, who worked on the Sydney Harbour Bridge during the Great Depression. Grandfather appears in one small work standing next to *Barrhill's* front gate while *Southern Circles* (fig 13) is a work prompted by my grandmother and the *Barrhill* interior.



Figure 30 Roslyn Meeker *Views II* 2015 Photopolymer etching, 18 x 20cm Figure 31 *There & Back II* 2015 Photopolymer etching 18 x 20cm

Some works were prompted by my romantic vision of my adopted Tasmanian home. I feel privileged to live in seclusion and wildness. From the beginning I embraced the Caledonian aspects of my new landscape, falling in love with the mist and dampness, bracken and thistles experienced on my small holding in the hills. I was enlivened by 'visual sublimity' and by pursuing what Womack called 'passions belonging to self-preservation' (Womack 1989 p. 80) as I augmented the usual hippy self-sufficient ideals with Scottish cultivars, such as Ailsa Craig onions and Musselborough leeks. For some years I ran the smallest registered herd of Ayrshire cows in Australia. Named Barrhill after my grandparents Sydney home and my grandfather's childhood



home in Ayrshire, the calves were named Barrhill Bonnie Annie, Barrhill Hieland Laddie and so forth. My lifestyle during this time could be construed as ‘performing Scottishness in the diaspora.’(Basu 2007 p. 42) It embraced another myth described by Tom Devine as that of the ‘noble peasant’, living a life ‘uncontaminated by urban vice and displaying all the virtues of loyalty, courage and endurance.’(Devine 2013 p. 93)

My Ayrshire cows appeared in a couple of preliminary works. As well as their link to ancestral ‘home’, I selected the breed on their reputation as a hardy beast that foraged well on rough land. According to the breed society, the Ayrshire is the ultimate in economical dairy cattle, characterised by its ‘high quality, longevity, ease of management and overall good health.’ A Scottish diaspora in its own way, it is noted that the breed is now found the world over, thriving in climatic extremes, whether in ‘African heat or a Scandinavian winter.’ (Ayrshire Cattle Society 2013) Unexpectedly, the visual appearance of the Ayrshire prompted discussion in studio and with friends and family on social media, with commentators stating their preference for the Muppet-like Highland cattle as opposed to the Ayrshire. I concluded that the image of Highland cattle was very much part of imagining the Highlands. I have never kept Highland cattle but I found an image of one on the Internet and imagineered a snowy landscape for it with liquid graphite.

I pondered more about Highland cattle when *Pilgrimage III* was received as being far more representative of things Scottish. It concerned me as a descendant of Lowlanders. Where should my allegiances lie? It was through thinking out this dilemma that *Nae True Coo II* was conceived.

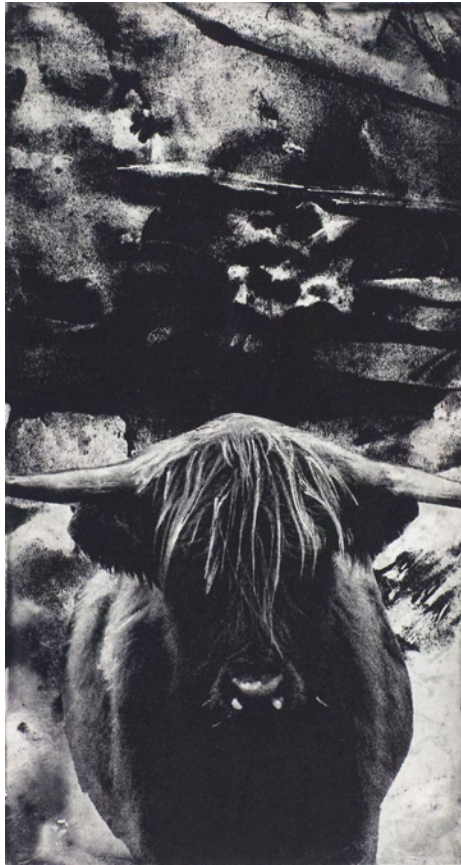


Figure 32 Roslyn Meeker *Pilgrimage III* 2015 Photopolymer Etching 18x11cm

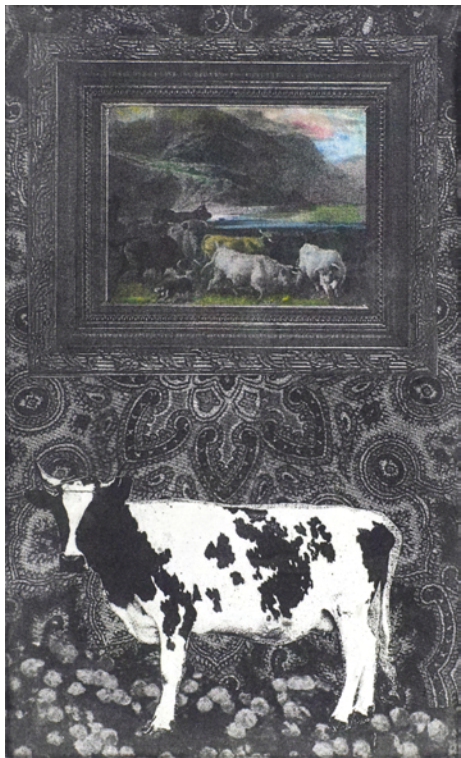


Figure 33 Roslyn Meeker *Nae True Coo II* (Second state) 2015 18x12cm Photopolymer Etching

The title of the work bears homage to the logical fallacy, *No True Scotsman*.

Philosopher Antony Flew named this type of faulty reasoning in which the goal posts are shifted during an argument, saying that the same wouldn't be said of a 'true example.'<sup>12</sup> I wondered, was Annie less Scottish because she came from lowlander stock? I then thought, of course, she is not a true cow. This print of a cow operates in a similar way to the pipe in Rene Magritte's *The Betrayal of Images*: it is a painting of a pipe and not a real pipe.<sup>13</sup>

This all reflects my own identity confusion because, throughout the world, Scotland is celebrated as being only the Scottish Highlands. As Womack says, 'the romance is not simply the aggregate of things; it is a message which things carry.' (Womack 1989 p.1) He claims the Highlands were tamed by semiotics and declares:

The highlands are no longer a place where people and animals live; they have been colonised by an empire of signs; they are what Roland Barthes calls a myth: that is, an object which is signified within an ordinary linguistic sign, but at the same time serves as a signifier within a second sign, having been, so to speak, pressed into the service of a concept. (Womack 1989 p. 2)

This is all the more relevant in a discussion of identity because as Womack explains, 'for diasporic Scots, the myth of the Highlands is, of course, also the myth of homeland.' (Womack 1989 p.19)

That I view my Tasmanian home through a Caledonian vision is evident in the many photos taken, particularly of light and weather on the ridge to the west and embedded at times into my work. I search for those moments that convey connections to the sublime, from the single shaft of light to radiating arches of light beams or great dark clouds against a back lit sky. In romantic attributes I am looking for what Womack discusses as the psychological terms of 'terror, obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, uniformity [and] difficulty.' He says that they, most logically, must be the strongest of passions of all as they belong to 'self-preservation.' (1989 p. 80)

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<sup>12</sup> *No True Scotsman* <https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/no-true-scotsman> Viewed 27/3/14

<sup>13</sup> A salmon smokes Magritte's pipe in the detail of *Imagineering Metaphors-Salmon*

In her study of Caledonian Society members in Melbourne, Australia, Kim Sullivan reported that her survey responses from Society members was a perception of Scotland ‘as a clan-based society,’ hallmarked by a ‘simple rustic lifestyle and an abiding loyalty to one’s own kind.’ (Sullivan p. 8) She describes this notion as both ‘conflated’ and ‘anachronistic,’ noting it was only in the Highlands where the clan-based system prevailed, and it died out during the 18th and 19th centuries. She states that it was because of the ‘often-tragic process by which Highland society collapsed’ including famine, clearance and diaspora, that ‘the clan, along with its accompanying symbols of bagpipes, tartan, and [a] primitive, rural way of life entered romantic folklore as a kind of lost ideal – the Scotland that never was.’ (Sullivan p. 9)

### **Homecomings, Pilgrimages and Field Research**

In June 2014, returning from the Scottish pilgrimage and family reunion, one of my first tasks was to sort, value and collate over a hundred photos of landscape experienced under my feet. The ground on which I had walked. I did some basic, experimental square cropping and made these images available to my supervisors. Disconnected from other motifs and visual cues, Dr Maria Kunda commented to me that she could not discern, from the images of feet and ground, enough distinctive Scottish values in the images, and feared that they ‘could be located anywhere.’ We discussed my idea of ‘punctuating’ the grounded images with some that shifted the gaze to the destination. I returned to my archive and selected another dozen images; sorting for those that I considered quests fulfilled. The hunted puffin and Highland coo. The Heart of Midlothian and the golden unicorn gate hinge at The Queen’s Gallery, both in Edinburgh’s Royal Mile.



Figures 34-36 Images from the *Field Research* suite including my feet on tartan carpet, a Highland Bull at Culloden Moor and unicorn gate hinge at the Queen’s Gallery, Holyrood, Edinburgh.

Using Photoshop I selected and cropped my foot work. I worked to draw the viewer's eye into the detail, the minutiae. I oversaturated colour, in some images exaggerating the vibrancy of late spring/early summer grass and the meadow flowers, remembering the brightness found as I emerged into the Caledonian landscape from the darkness of a Tasmanian winter. Images were heightened, drenched with those warm colours of sunsets. I tried to accentuate romantic attributes whilst still trying to evoke authentic experience and response.

A number of these images, in different sizes and with different sized borders, were printed on Hahnemuhle 325gsm photorag paper.

Whereas Dr Maria Kunda worried about the shift from imagineering and etching, Dr Yvette Watt questioned whether the images constituted such a dramatic shift as to not bear much relationship to prior *Familiar Ground* works and should be seen as a separate project altogether. The images were also seen as not being amusing and verged on imparting a sense of danger. Those distortions were particularly apparent as I rotated the images of my downward gaze in Photoshop. In some cases depth is lost and my legs appear collaged into the picture field.

I tried a number of strategies to interrupt my journey of digital prints. First I took the most literal path I gathered the materials for lino etching; squares of lino, bitumen, caustic soda and wallpaper paste. The etched lino gave unsuitable results especially in regard to depth of etch and resolution. In an attempt to resolve the images I applied layers of shellac and printed some interesting collagraphic images but I became aware that once again I was that this was not the right direction and I had wasted time on this line of investigation and response.

Finally the penny clicked as I re-read the Basu quote proved true: 'The process of imagineering the ancestral homeland may be said to continue in the homeland itself.' (Basu 2007 p. 126)

Collages were planned to interrupt and incorporate into *Familiar Ground: Field Research* digital installation. Images of quests were cropped and manipulated, again

pushing emotional romantic ideals before printing them on the same paper stock. The collages were composed on this digital printed ground. Collages and photopolymer plates were made, to provide new black and white etchings to incorporate into fresh collages.

The *Field Research* collages take cues from the digital body of work they sit in, those images of the faraway ground from which the family came, that ground on which I walked with my siblings, cousins, and other more distant relatives, that ground upon which we all looked back to the past. The works stand apart from others exhibited in the way they depict Scottish ground and lack any Australian/Tasmanian connection aside from the presence of this author. The collages also take their cue and references from many of my black and white 'imagineerings' hung elsewhere in the gallery. Thusly, the *Field Research* works operate as a discussion of both physical ground and psychological landscape, something not entirely planned, but very much within the normal scope of my printmaking practice.

The use of collage as an end rather than process in the *Field Research* installation is a much different direction to the one I set out on. In only one other work have I taken this route. *A Case for Pilgrimage* is a work first exhibited in the *\*runs with scissors\** exhibition at the Long Gallery in the Salamanca Arts Centre in 2014. I tore up a piece of my previously printed red wallpaper panelling and reassembled it with double sided tape and masking tape into a long lean rectangle. My daughter assisted with the decorative sewing. Stitches, colour choices and hanging threads were to my direction, all worked on lines pencilled by myself. Printed salmon from the *Imagineering Metaphors* work were used as surface collage components. The work was exhibited 30cm from the gallery floor in a deep box frame. Afterwards, sitting in my studio, I spent much time imagining its reworking.





Figure 37 Roslyn Meeker *A Case for Pilgrimage* 2015 Approx. 40 x 40cm Steel etching, photopolymer etching, watercolour, ink, thread

Finally I took it from its frame, ripped it in half, reconfigured it closer to square and sent it back to the sewing machinist to be rejoined. I then worked each small panel with a brush, layering diluted wood glue, bringing a leathery texture to the piece. The salmon were reprinted, hand coloured, glazed, recomposed, collaged, framed and wall mounted. Touched up with silvery pearlescent ink they became more lifelike. Richer in its finish, I found the second iteration more successful. The strength in the work, in my opinion, is in how representative it is of many discussions contained in this exegesis e.g. the rich redness (p. 63) of the wallpaper (p. 12), the metaphor of the

salmon representing the Scottish diaspora (p. 33), and the thread as a genealogical metaphor (p. 31).

### **Summary**

The *Familiar Ground* works sprang from nostalgia for the past, family narrative (the authentic, the kitsch and the legacy of the grim joke), haunting memories, fond reminiscences, conceptual cues and emotional prompts, but the works rely foremost on the imagination. Incorporated into the imagery is the myth, the ‘stuff’ that never was, but that which is held very dear by myself, my family before me and the Scottish diaspora. Through imagineering, homeland is idealised in an incorrect but consistent manner. Evidence of this inconsistency existed from the outset of this study but now also the effect of this research is apparent in my printed works. Woven and tacked together, the visual narrative of *Familiar Ground* is one that is evocative of the loss and fragmentation of cultural heritage. By imagineering and working in the manner of the bricoleur, small fragments can be collaged together to visually communicate something, not whole, neither real, nor even authentic, but still something representative of Scotland as a past homeland. Also, the imagining of a Scottish homeland is a filter with which I envisage my Tasmanian home and lifestyle.



### CHAPTER 3: IMAGERY OF IDENTITY

In this chapter I delineate a contextual field in regard to multicultural and diasporic art practice, and my imagining of Scottish/Australian identity. Casting a metaphoric net, I capture artists and works influencing and supporting my identity quest in my own university studio, and in the broader field of multicultural art practice in Australia, with reference to Scottish artists in Victorian times in both Australia and Scotland. By no means a complete survey, nonetheless it is intended to provide a context for the *Familiar Ground* suite of prints. I cover artists in Australia who were commissioned to produce work for Scottish migrant tastes and through doing so I pose the idea of a Scottish gaze. I examine Danie Mellor's contemporary works about his Scottish-Australian identity and Scottish artist Rachel Maclean's exploration into the images of Scottish identity set against a time of national introspection.

The Printmaking Studio at the Tasmanian School of Art (Now the Tasmanian College of the Arts, Hunter Street) has, over the years, produced notable research and creative work dealing with diasporic identity. In defining a contextual field of artists that explore issues of identity, migration and diaspora, I will commence by examining this immediate working context of the studio I share.

Past department head, Milan Milojevic, is perhaps the most notable in this regard. His work in the *Haven* 2004 group show at the Salamanca Art Centre's Long Gallery, introduced me to him. *Djoka's Dairies* layered and fused together family photos and various attributes of European inheritance with memories of his childhood years in Bronte Park, Tasmania. The installation included foreign language books, some of which once belonged to the artist's father. The front covers were removed, the top printed page exposed and ink jet printed with images of homeland, family; the imagined, the remembered and the long discarded. The work made a marked impression on me when I saw it exhibited, years before I stepped onto the floor of the Printmaking department.

In 2012, upon Milojevic's retirement, a major retrospective called *A World Between* was held in the University of Tasmania's Plimsoll Gallery. Perhaps the most disturbing of the works shown was *Arrival*, a multi-panelled portrait of Milojevic's German mother and Serbian father, and sandwiched between them an image of

naked migrants being hosed down *en masse* by migration authorities. There was also light humour such as in Milojevic's 1984 portrait with his mother called *Portrait of my Mother (some people say we look alike)* in which both sport a plastic Groucho Marx nose and spectacles.

In Milojevic's oeuvre and the *Familiar Ground* suite there is a common use of photographic source alongside hand drawn elements, resulting in a sort of absurdity found such as those appropriating quotations of imagery from Luis Borges' *The Book of Imaginary Beings* and the construction (imagineering) of his *Two Worlds Collide* series that coincidentally emanated from a Glasgow residency. (Milojevic 2012 p. 36)



Figure 38 Detail from Milan Milojevic's 2012 installation, *Djoka's Dairies*. Image source: *Haven* <<http://www.kitez.com/haven/artists/milan.htm>>

Figure 39 Milan Milojevic *Arrival* 1990 Image source: (Milojevic 2012 p. 12)

Earlier in this exegesis, I briefly discussed Dr Karen Lunn's work that developed out of a suitcase of possessions kept by her migrant father. *Boy Father Holding a Ball*, is a 1997 lithograph, hand drawn, working from an old photograph. To this cropped figure with a piercing gaze she has added watery markings to an 'unknown coastline, a compass rose and rhumb lines.' (Lunn 2004 p. 59) The little ball and the outfit worn are explained in Lunn's thesis to be gifts sent from relatives who had previously immigrated to the USA, revealing the diasporic narrative contained. Lunn also etched, layered and printed various intricacies of her grandmother's wedding dress, working to piece together fragments in her imagination. I was influenced by these works, especially the delicateness of etchings based on cloth, lace and needlework, in

fact, the *Familiar Ground* etchings reflect my continued intrigue into the capacity for the etching process to capture the textures and characteristics of textiles.



Figure 40 Karen Lunn *Boy Father Holding a Ball* 1997 Lithograph 72 x 47cm

Working upon this theme of diasporic identity I initiated a group show with recent University of Tasmania Master of Fine Art and Design Printmaking graduates Katina Gavalas and Kate Piekutowski. *\*runs with scissors\**, held at the Long Gallery in the Salamanca Arts Centre in February 2014 exploited a camaraderie between the three of us as we share many commonalities beyond time in studio. We all pursued different process-driven printmaking techniques to render into our images clues of identity and a diasporic narrative. We speak about our work using a similar lexicon; words such as memory, nostalgia, fabrics, threads and fragments. Kate's and my own visual language is particularly similar.

Katina Gavalas work drew on family artefacts and home wares, as mine sometimes does, and she says she 'collects and relocates her grandmother's embroideries with the intention of giving these primary sources new context,' endeavouring to find a 'new sense of belonging.'<sup>14</sup> Incorporating into her work the classical aesthetics of her Greek homeland, her process involves the wrapping and revealing of what might

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<sup>14</sup> From Katina's notes supplied to self for the *\*runs with scissors\** proposal.

appear to be dressmaker's dummies or ancient Grecian statuary. She accomplishes this through the use of collage, mixed media and stitching on dry pointed and collagraph prints, using the impression of both heirloom cloth and mass produced fabric.



Figure 41 Poster outside the Long Gallery during *\*runs with scissors\**

Figure 42 Katina Gavalas, *Old and New* 2013, Relief Print and Collage, 100 x 70cm

Figure 43 Kate Piekutowski *Diptych* 2013 Steel etching/screenprint 1.0 x 1.40m

Kate's Piekutowski's image making and practice considers identity, longing, belonging and the search for a lost homeland. Her work is influenced by an inherited



European aesthetic and her nostalgic connection to the past. Piekutowski is drawn to the romantic, finding inspiration in old fashioned portraits, fabrics and lace, as well as heritage and familial links.

The work of Gavalas and Piekutowski and my own are close in context, sharing concerns about diaspora, the printmaking process and the metaphor of 'the thread.' Although the narratives are different, we share mechanisms and tropes. The exhibition lead-time was such that few works were developed for it specifically, yet the show had coherence.

One of my supervisors, Dr Maria Kunda, also did her Masters in the then Tasmanian School of Art's Printmaking studio, with works of self-portraiture/self-depiction entitled *A Radical Act of Remembering*. Later, her theory based PhD, *The Politics of Imperfection: the Critical Legacy of Surrealist Anti-colonialism*, investigated the theoretical connections between exile, surrealism and appropriation in modern Australian art. In short, she argued that the range of collage-montage, appropriation and *détournement* operations undertaken by the Surrealists, enabled the picturing of 'ideas about colonialism, societal evolution and race.' Seeking to revalue the usefulness of such appropriation strategies for post-colonial artists she examined works by Imants Tillers, Gordon Bennett and Tracey Moffatt. (Kunda M 2010 p. iv) Kunda describes 1980s appropriation in Australian art as being distinct from postmodern appropriation practice undertaken in the centres of the art world, saying that these artists were 'anything but historicising or cool,' and she maintains that here in Australia appropriation art was more earnestly 'driven by desire and a commitment to change.' Kunda argues that 'the engine of such art making is a desire not for ironic distance but for inclusion, connection, reparation and convergence, as well as outright social and political critique.' (Kunda 2010 p. 223) I believe that this description of the motivation for and use of appropriation fits my own work. Though they contain a dark humour, the *Familiar Ground* works are also not intended to be hostile, neither to mock, deride or to be in anyway iconoclastic. In her conclusion Kunda states 'the Surrealist path pushes toward visualising what cannot yet be seen or experienced,' (Kunda 2010 p. 252) bringing some justification to my use of collage and appropriation in imagineering a homeland.

Tiller's references to ground and Bennett's black humour drew my interest, but it was another Australian artist, Danie Mellor, whose work captured my attention repeatedly. An example of his work, *The Fruits of Labour*, along with his Curriculum Vitae plucked from the internet, was shuffled across my desk many times during the course of this study.



Figure 44 Danie Mellor *The Fruits of Labour* 2010 Pencil, glitter, Swarovski crystal 152 x 100cm Collection of the Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria. Image source: (Mellor 2014 p.64)

*The Fruits of Labour* demands close investigation with its formal qualities reminiscent of colonial administration and propaganda. The kangaroo operates as symbol on the chessboard, in itself that represents the tactical game being played, with each side of this game represented by three pillars of wisdom.<sup>15</sup> The motif of the pineapple located in the centre shield ornamentation stood out to me. I saw many

<sup>15</sup> The three pillars traditionally denote wisdom, beauty and strength. (Cooper 2001 p. 130) Online masonic dictionary informs me that the three pillars represent the supports under which lies the lodge. <http://www.masonicdictionary.com/pillars.html>



pineapples in stone decoration form on my Scottish tour. I was told they represented fertility and my text on the meanings of traditional symbols confirms this (Cooper 2001 p. 132), however, I wondered, in this context, whether this symbol actually denoted the state of Queensland? Some of the symbols and visual language contained within his work is immediately highly coherent to me and other messages, such as the allusions to aboriginal and masonic rite, remain unknown or are at best guessed at.

The deeper I looked the more similarities between our work became apparent. Most obviously, both Mellor and I repurpose traditional renderings of landscape, the type found in many homes a century ago. We are both concerned with landscape in the real and landscape in the imagination. Whereas I have been spending this time thinking of my grandfather's hallway, Mellor has worked from the sort of articles found on the plate rails at Barrhill. Whereas I have appropriated paintings and prints of the time, Mellor has appropriated from ceramics and the art of engraving. I have looked to similarities found between these landscapes ideals and my Tasmanian home, whereas Mellor surreptitiously juxtaposes a more exotic Queensland alongside and inside the British landscape ideal and the message of empire.

In 2014 I was reminded about Mellor when I read of his Edinburgh Art festival exhibition staged in the National Museum of Scotland. Here the works were juxtaposed with curated objects from the Museum's North Queensland Collection. Reviewing Mellor's *Primordial: SuperNaturalBayiMinyjirral* exhibition for *The Australian*, Michaela Boland introduced Mellor as a 'tall and lanky 43-year-old [born] in Mackay to an Australian father with American heritage and a mother with Aboriginal (Mamu and Ngagen) and Scottish heritage.' She noted that he'd travelled and dwelt in his early years in Scotland and Brisbane, but he deemed the Atherton Tablelands, his mother's country, as the inspiration for his work. She also noted that Mellor also has a Scottish wife, a fellow artist, Joanne Kennedy. (Boland 2014) Boland revealed that Mellor, as a collector of Spode, is articulate about the ceramics first produced in 1770 by Josiah Spode and that Mellor developed interest in the 'transferware'<sup>16</sup> developed during his early career in printmaking. (Boland 2014)

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<sup>16</sup> Transferware applies to ceramics ornamented by printing decals and transferring them to the ceramics before firing.

Boland also points to a certain amount of imagination on the part of Spode craftsmen who he says worked ‘essentially second-hand images’ in the form of ‘botanical and biological sketches.’ (Boland 2014) She puts it that the Spode engravers that Mellor appropriates were already dealing with interpretation of sources and ‘degree of historical Disneyfication.’ (Boland 2014)

In the forward to the catalogue that accompanied the 2014 major survey of Mellor’s works, *Sacred Lies Exotic Ties*, Director of the University of Queensland Museum, Dr Campbell Gray, lauds Mellor’s collected works noting the fine craftsmanship, ‘embellished and framed, with images and devices that disarm with humour, narrative and play on ‘the exotic.’ His work, she says, is rich in ‘believable but impossible visual scenarios’ where ‘stories collide and metaphors reach further than expected.’ (Gray in Mellor 2014 p.11)

In his own words Mellor echoes some of my own sentiments, saying he is an artist and storyteller, and that his work engages with ‘dual cultural perspectives.’ (Mellor 2014 p. 21) I found his discussion about frames and borders pertinent to my *Familiar Ground* works. Whereas frames and borders are often layered into my compositions, Mellor’s frames and borders take on a traditional role, which he defines by referring back to Simon Schama’s writings in *Landscape and Memory*, where Schama explains that 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century borders were devices ‘to suggest a poetic space or allegory’. He says his borders function in a narrative rather ‘truthful’ way and depict not a historic event as such but historic sensibility. (Mellor 2014 p. 49)

In conversation with Mellor, the Australian aboriginal curator Hetti Perkins put it that the large-scale, gold framed history paintings of those times, were a tactic: a propaganda tool for imperialism and authority, but then she counters herself saying, ‘[B]ut then you have those ‘stag of the glen’ romanticised views of Scotland sans torture, bloodshed, starvation.’ Mellor responds by saying that this is landscape as we are used to it; ‘a very particular convention.’ (Mellor 2014 p. 51) He describes ‘Country’ as an ‘immersive experience, a knowledge framework which is built up around seasonal cycles, your own relationship to that land through kin or ancestral connection, or heritage and material culture and art’ whereas he perceives Western

landscape frame works as ‘a speculative way of observing,[...]’ framed, squared, presented, mapped out, but ultimately owned.’ (Mellor 2014 p. 51)

Mellor’s description of Country, in my view, approximates Basu’s description of ‘*Duthchas*,’ a Gaelic term referring to a ‘person’s native land, hereditary rights of tenure to the land and to more general senses of cultural heritage.’ (Mellor 2014 p. 51) *Duthchas* encompasses hereditary qualities, culture, and homeland. It denotes the indigenous and inherited. Basu discusses the word *Duthchas* to point to the way that ‘place is integrated into a sense of identity and ancestry in Gaelic tradition.’ (Basu 2007 p. 124/5) My sense is that Basu, discussing the native Scot and *Duthchas*, and Mellor, discussing Country, address a very similar idea.

Mellor recounts that by travelling to England and meeting his wife, with her ‘different cultural framework,’ he widened his own frame dramatically so that he was able to view a ‘multiplicity of perspectives.’ (Mellor 2014 p. 59) He is aware of his position as ‘the other’ in his appropriation of Spode. He conducts a conversation about Orientalism by subverting the Willow Pattern, already appropriated from the Chinese and subverted to British interests for two centuries. (Mellor 2014 p. 67) By eating off plates such as this, Mellor says that stories were revealed as the meal was eaten and as such the meal was as much about ‘consuming culture’ as it was about consuming food. (Mellor 2014 p. 67) Presented in an approachable readymade format, his work serves to remind us that much Victorian era imagery was about selling the idea of empire, the landscape ideal and the notion of a British home.



Figure 45 Danie Mellor *History Interrupted* 2007 Pastel, pencil and wash 110 x 152cm Image source: (Mellor 2014 p.106)

Many of the qualities and concerns in Mellor's works – observations taken from the plate rails, china cabinet and dinner table of treasured Victoriana, are explored in my own. He illustrates his identity by shifting the conversation to one of land and landscape, ground and groundlessness.

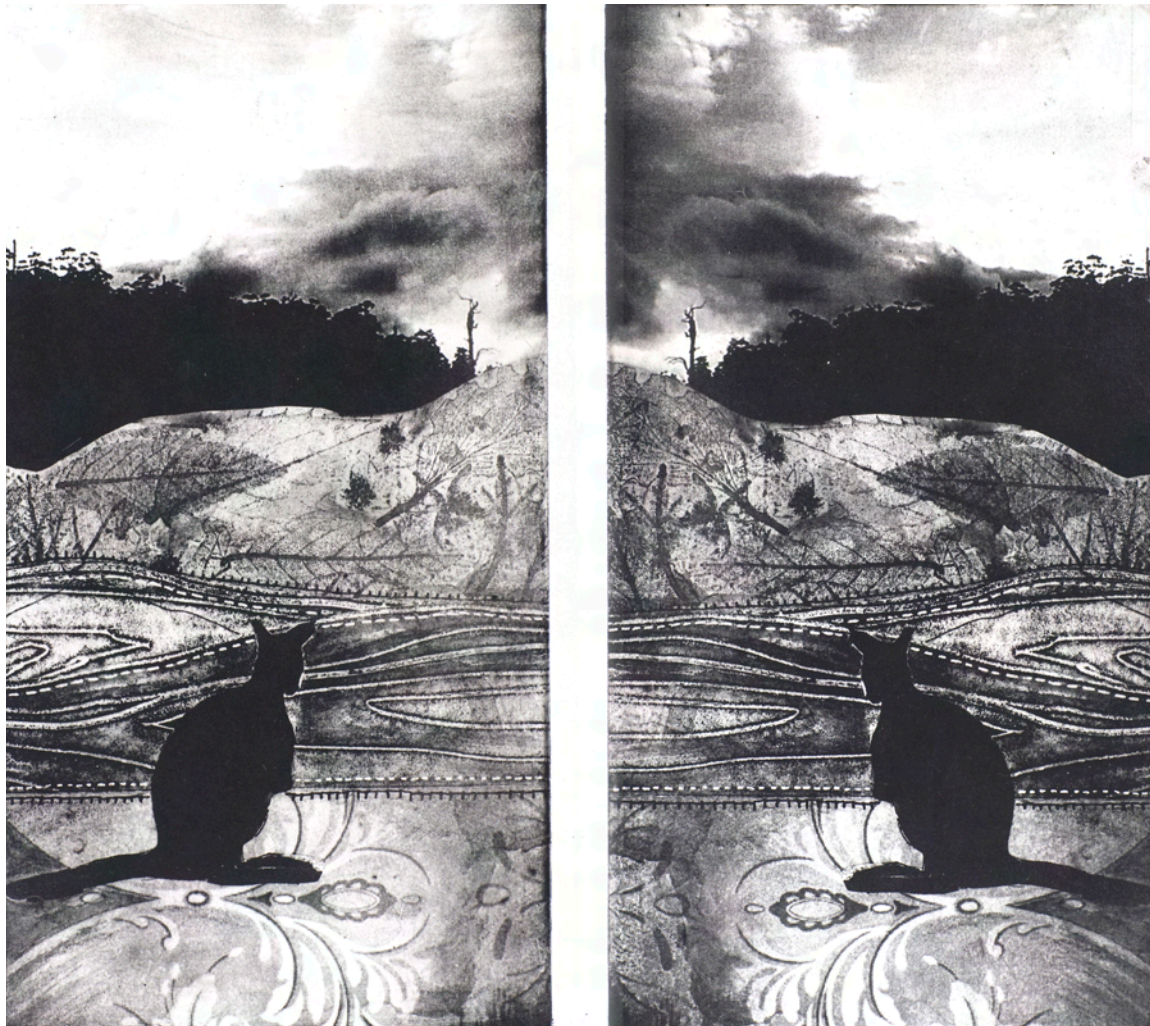


Figure 46 Roslyn Meeker *Landscape (Reflected)* 2015 25 x28.5cm Photopolymer etching



## Scotland and Identity Today

In 2013 the Edinburgh Art Festival was the stage for Rachel Maclean's exhibition, *I heart Scotland*. A Glasgow artist, Maclean is also a storyteller and her work is a roller coaster of humour and sly digs. The exhibition was commissioned and published by Edinburgh Printmakers in the lead up to the Scottish Independence Referendum. The works explored the imagery of Scottish identity.



Figure 47 Rachel Maclean, *The Queen*, 2013, Archival Inkjet Print, 50.5 x 40.5cm Image courtesy of the artist

In her exhibition statement Maclean first drew attention to the timing of the exhibition:

Concurrent with the referendum on Scottish Independence, the Scottish Executive is planning 'Homecoming 2014'<sup>17</sup>, a yearlong celebration of golf, whisky, tartan, Robert Burns and among other things, the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. "Targeting Scots, ancestral Scots and all those who simply love Scotland" the event plays into a soft focus mythology of exotic peoples and rugged wilderness, constructed and developed out of a legacy of fictions, from Walter Scott's heroic highlander through to Mel Gibson's defiant Braveheart. As First Minister, Alex Salmond readily testifies, this branded Scotland generates a lot of capital. Consequently, we might consider these efforts as simply a cynical exploitation of touristic naivety for economic gain. On the other hand, the promotion of this seductive myriad of semi-historical signifiers is also revealing of cultural anxieties surrounding national identity and an exploitation of history as a conduit for the unification of a diverse and complex contemporary society.' (Maclean in Edinburgh Printmakers, 2012)



Figure 48 Rachel Maclean, *Freedom!* 2013, Archival Inkjet Print, 50.5 x 40.5cm Image courtesy of the artist

<sup>17</sup> The Cranston Reunion was scheduled around/became part of *Homecoming 2014*.



At no point did Maclean reveal to her audience her personal preference for the outcome of the referendum. She insisted it was more ‘about a discussion of national identity within that context.’ She says her characters are ‘loosely based on Brigadoon-style costumes’ and a ‘sort of Lord of the Rings, Braveheart-y, mythical character,’ drawn from historical mythologies ‘rather than the actual history.’(Taylor 2013)



Figure 49 Left: Rachel Maclean *Yes*, 2013, Archival Inkjet Print, 50.5 x 40.5cm Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 50 Right: Rachel Mclean *No*, 2013, Archival Inkjet Print, 50.5 x 40.5cm Image courtesy of the artist

I followed the referendum on the internet and while I travelled in Scotland. I romanced the YES vote. I purchased some badges and gave quite a few away as some kind of positive momento. After the vote I told people I was gutted. I wasn't really. I was just parroting the comment most often read on social media, as the YES rallied together under a new banner, the 45%.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath of the Scottish Independence referendum I read a piece by Guardian reporter Paul Mason titled

<sup>18</sup> Callum Paton writing for *The Independent* described it thus: ‘They may have lost the referendum, but those who voted for independence last week are showing no sign of backing down in the demand for autonomy. A Facebook campaign group called “We are the 45%”, in reference to the proportion of people who voted in favour of Scotland leaving the union, has been set up by those determined to keep the dream of independence alive. Set up in the wake of last week's result, the movement has already attracted more than 150,000 likes on its Facebook page.’ (Paton, C 2014)

*Scotland's young, feisty yes generation has nowhere to go.* A few comments captured my attention. Mason paints the picture, a few nights before the referendum, when he says, 'Glasgow's youth thought they could win independence.' He observed them in the streets draped in three different flag types. There was the Scottish saltire with the word YES overwritten, the logo of the YES campaign. There was the flag of the Catalans, who are pursuing their own independence dream and I suppose were present in Glasgow in some sort of supportive role. For the benefit of my study it was the flag Mason found the most interesting that was also the most interesting to me. He describes a saltire atop Day-Glo tartan, one 'never worn by clan' and 'as yet unlisted on the official register,' with two lions rampant a central figure. He conjectured this figure to be Robert the Bruce, but he said it looked more 'like a Scotland football fan in a ginger wig, kilt, and tam o'shanter, groggy with drink, and arms akimbo.' The finishing touch, 'a shoddy, pixellated digital font,' declaring a one-word message: Freedom. Mason makes the claim that this was 'a statement of identity' and a case of young Scots 'montaging their present onto their past.' (Mason P 2014) The short few words, 'montaging their present onto their past' resonated in me. It occurs to me that montaging my present onto my past would be another way of describing my own method.

Mason's observations about Scottishery and tartanry resonate with Maclean's lurid, overtly kitsch identity works. Maclean plays the roles of her own created characters. The symbolic gestures and components added to the works have a place whether they are representative of good or bad taste. In fact there is a somewhat creepy, overtly kitsch, sickly pallor to her works. For example, *The Queen* gives a sense of Victoriana, nostalgia, and romance, but it is grotesque and totally untrue. Somehow though it draws me back to *Barrhill*, to the black and white TV tuned to Arnold Palmer and the smell of the pipe on its stand.

Maclean's *I HEART SCOTLAND* works remind me of my own collage pursuits, the sense of play and the appropriations. She says that she started collaging papers and 'doing sculptures with bits of fabric' when she was a student and her work progressed to film and the green screen, exciting her, and enabling her to collage 'bits of scenarios together to create one big environment. (Boyd 2014) Maclean's darkly humorous theatrical parodies are performed by outrageous character inventions that

‘slip[s] inside and outside history’ and drink ‘North Sea oil from Jacobite crystal, divide up pieces of a Union Jack cake and incite conflict over the mispronunciation of the poetry of Robert Burns.’<sup>19</sup>

### **Scottish Identity as Seen in Two Exhibitions**

From the outset of this study I was aware of an increase in the discussion of Scottish identity occurring in both Scotland and Australia. The crest of this wave for me came with the 2014 exhibition *For Auld Lang Syne: Images of Scottish Australia from First Fleet to Federation* staged at The Art Gallery of Ballarat. Large of scale and broad in scope, it was curated by Dr Alison Inglis, Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Melbourne, and Patricia Tryon Macdonald, who was also guest curator for the 2005/6 exhibition *Exiles and Emigrants: Epic Journeys to Australia in the Victorian Era* at the National Gallery of Victoria. The catalogue is a collection of essays with glossy colour illustrations, a hardback edition 335 pages in length. It is introduced by Prince Charles who described it as ‘this innovative narration of the extraordinary story of Scottish Australia.’ (Prince Charles in Inglis, MacDonald 2014 p. 9) When I visited the exhibition I noted many similarities between the Art Gallery of Ballarat show and the exhibition in Glasgow’s Kelvingrove Art Gallery.

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<sup>19</sup> Exhibition event notice, Edinburgh Festival 2013  
<[http://www.edinburghartfestival.com/2013/exhibitions/edinburgh\\_printmakers\\_2013/](http://www.edinburghartfestival.com/2013/exhibitions/edinburgh_printmakers_2013/)>

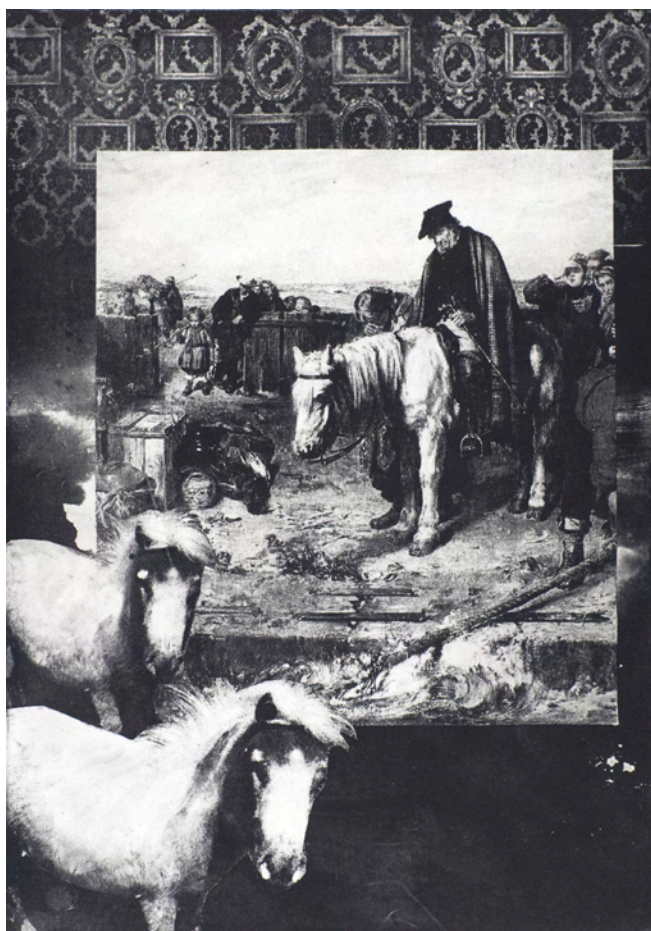


Figure 51 Roslyn Meeker *Homecoming II* 2015 (Second state) 28 x 20cm Photopolymer etching

I visited Kelvingrove Gallery specifically to see Thomas Faed's *The Last of the Clan* (fig 53), a work appropriated in *Homecoming II*; I found it in an exhibition space titled *Scottish Identity in Art*. The exhibition was staged to examine where 'ideas of Scottishness' have come from and interestingly, these works were hung alongside contemporary works that are linked to Scottish identity today.<sup>20</sup>

Dotted through the exhibition space were informative and educational gallery statements that pin-pointed various exhibits giving them an historical perspective and taking opportunity to debunk myth in the process. They debunked the image of the long-haired, plaid wearing medieval warrior immortalised in the Hollywood rendering of *Braveheart*, preferring the idea of a more conventional soldier in armour. They explained my great grandmother's pebble brooch as a Victorian romantic place-based souvenir in medieval style. In glass cabinets labelled

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<sup>20</sup> Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum- A Souvenir Guide Glasgow Museums Publishing with Philip Wilson Publishers

‘Tartanalia’ the message was that tartan, a symbol once so powerful that it was banned, now graces international catwalks, and has modern value in tourist and export dollars.



Figure 52 Left: Gustave Dore *Glen Massan* 1873/4 90 x 150cm, oil on canvas. (detail)

Figure 53: Right Photograph of gallery statement at Kelvingrove Gallery. Images by author, taken in gallery tour, Kelvingrove Art Gallery.

Both Glasgow and Ballarat exhibitions had stuffed stags, artefacts in glass cabinets, paintings of men in Highland dress and epic landscapes with deer or Highland cattle – but the shows took a different tack. The Glasgow exhibition leant heavily towards Victoriana, but allowed the conversation on identity to carry on to contemporary artists dealing with identity themes. The Ballarat exhibition looked back upon the time between Australian settlement and Federation. Many of the artefacts shown in Ballarat might be part of any exhibition dealing with colonial Australia. Five main themes were pursued over four gallery spaces; Science and Discovery, Establishing a New Society, Ingenuity and Enterprise, Taste and Tradition and Caledonis Australis. Ballarat’s extensive use of their own newly registered tartan which decorated the gallery walls and commercial spaces and the Ballarat CBD was a notable cotemporary aspect of an otherwise historical exhibition.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The Tartan Register Ballarat Tartan Reference 10988 Registration 12 February 2014  
<<http://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/tartanDetails.aspx?ref=10988>>





Figure 54 Left: City of Ballarat tartan

Image source: The Scottish Register of Tartans

<<http://www.tartanregister.gov.uk/tartanDetails.aspx?ref=10988>>

Figure 55 Right: *For Auld Lang Syne* at the Art Gallery of Ballarat (note City of Ballarat tartan as wallpaper on rear wall)

Image source: <[https://www.facebook.com/ArtGalleryBallarat/photos\\_stream](https://www.facebook.com/ArtGalleryBallarat/photos_stream)>

Both exhibitions included the highly sentimental works of Thomas Faed. In Glasgow it was *The Last of the Clan*, a powerful work about the Highland Clearances, with its visual narrative of sadness, grief and dispossession, but in Ballarat, a smaller but not insignificant Thomas Faed work, *The Mitherless Bairn* told a story about acceptance and rehoming.



Figure 56 Left: Thomas Faed *The Last of the Clan* 1865, 86.3 x 111.7cm, Kelvingrove Art Gallery Glasgow

Image Source: <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas\\_Faed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Faed)>

Figure 57 Right: Thomas Faed *The Mitherless Bairn* 1855, 63.2 x 90cm, Purchased by NGV 1886- on loan to Ballarat

Image Source: <<http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/3947>>

*For Auld Lang Syne* claimed as Scottish both convict artist Thomas Watling and photographer James Watt Beattie. Their works hung alongside important works by Eugene von Guérard and John Glover, which had been commissioned by Scottish pastoralists. The catalogue essay *The Thistle and the Eucalypt: Eugene von Guérard and the Scots* discusses some of Ruth Pullin's research into Austrian born von Guérard's notebooks. She commences her essay with an 1857 entry, a delicate sketch of a 'Schottische [sic] thistle.' (Pullin R in Inglis A, MacDonald P 2014 p. 160)



Figure 58 Eugene von Guérard 'Schottische Thistle' sketch 1857 pencil, watercolour. Image source: (Inglis A, MacDonald P 2014 p. 160)

Pullin notes that at the time sixty per cent of Victoria's pastoralists were Scottish and the commissions von Guérard received were, for the most part, recording of achievements as these properties became established. She reels off a list of von Guérard's Scottish patrons, including the successful and notorious Gippsland based Skye-born Highlander, Angus McMillan, however she takes particular note of the majority, the many lowland Scots that settled in the Western districts. These Scots, she claims, were tight knit and their hospitality generous, often including the loan of horses. The commissions had a 'rhizome like' spread through the 1850s and 1860s. (Pullin in Inglis, MacDonald 2014 p. 160) She also notes that it was through the Scottish eyes of explorer Major Thomas Mitchell that von Guérard was introduced to the region that was the substance of much of his work. ' (Pullin R in Inglis A, MacDonald P 2014 p. 161) It was by making this link, that the Australian settler



landscape was viewed through ‘Scottish eyes,’ that I finally saw a vital relationship between the Scottish engravings of Highland cows by the loch at sunset and Australian pastoralist paintings of cattle in eroded gullies. It also suggested a link for me between epic romantic Scottish paintings I had seen on shortbread tins, at Ballarat, at Kelvingrove in Glasgow, the Scottish romantics, von Guérard’s epic works and my own vision of my Tasmanian home.

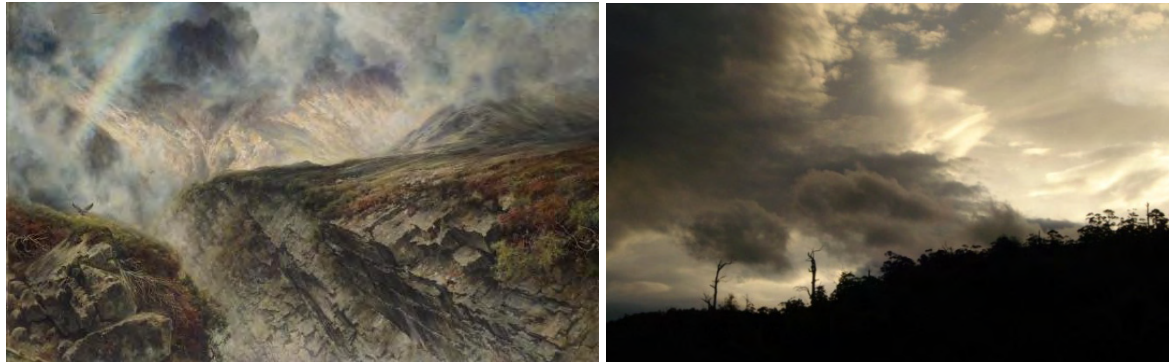


Figure 59 Left: Keeley Hallswelle *The Heart of the Coolins* 1886 oil on canvas. (Inglis A, MacDonald P 2014 p. 233)

Figure 60 Right: Photo by author taken from the house in Snug Tiers, Tasmania, 2008, used in a number of works as collage component.

In another catalogue essay in *For Auld Lang Syne*, Suzanne Fraser notes Scottish art historian Murdo Macdonald’s caution in 2004 to veer away from using the term ‘British art’ academically, since its use has historically favoured English works and ignored works of Scottish artists. (Fraser in Inglis, MacDonald 2014 p. 237) The Ballarat exhibition certainly achieves in making this distinction. Six years in the making, to me the Ballarat exhibition is more proof of the current revisionism, across many fields, that seeks to separate Scottish identity from British history and extol the children of Scotia for their like traits and achievements. One wonders whether the insistence of this distinction will continue and prosper in the future.

John Weretka writing for Melbourne Art Network contended that the Ballarat exhibition sought to prove ‘that the Scots helped make Australia’ and that the exhibition’s ethnographic approach made visible the extent of that contribution. (Weretka 2014) His statement reminded me of Arthur Hermann’s book *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe’s Poorest Nation Created Our World & Everything in it*. Weretka’s claim is more modest and easier to digest. His argument seemed cogent in a visual sense and the

Ballarat exhibition did indeed make me revise my thinking. It provided me with a valid reasoning to how my own visions of a 'Caledonis Australis' came to be.

### Some notes on the *Familiar Ground* exhibition & installation

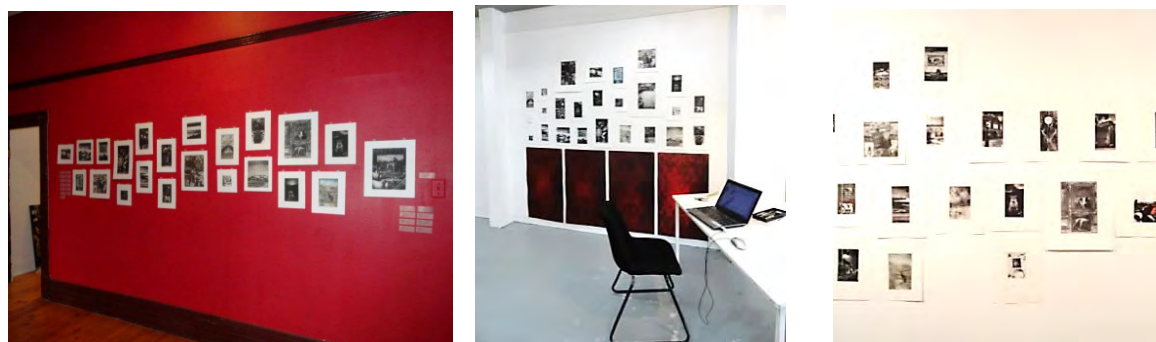


Figure 61 *Imagineering* exhibition at the Brunswick St Gallery, Fitzroy 2012 Figure 62 Works installed with etched panelling for *Landscape Imagined*, Entrepot Gallery 2013 Figure 63 Works installed on white wall *\*runs with scissors\** Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart 2014. A very large hang was let down by the lack of contrast between white borders and white walls.

During the course of research I pursued different installation strategies in several gallery spaces. They were loosely based on the types of informal group hang that were popular in Victorian times. In the *Imagineering* exhibition, at Brunswick Street Gallery in Melbourne, the works were staged to suggest a small Victorian parlour room, painted red, complete with deep skirtings, picture rail and marble fireplace. This configuration was successful, insofar as the gallery space offered a nostalgic space and connected the viewer to times past. The coloured wall also provided a good contrast for the prints. I adopted a similar hanging strategy for *Landscape Imagined*, a group show in the Entrepot gallery. There, I hung the imagineerings over four vertical 'drops' of soft ground etching, made and hung to emulate a richly papered dado.

Elements of these etchings were subsequently used as collage ground for *A Case for Pilgrimage*, as well as in a number of works in the *Field Research* series. I used the leftover blended red ink in the layering of two works, the *Sentinels* (Fig 63), which either 'guarded' or 'bookmarked' the imagineerings. The paint colour for the red wall on which the imagineerings were hung was tinted to match, and thus the colour wove

itself through the entire submission from first to last. It evoked a colonial drawing room and paid homage to the historic use of black, white and red in printmaking. Harkening back to the poppies that grew from Flanders Field, the use of the colour also serves as a reminder of remembrance and loss.

The gallery plan was such that on entry the eye of a visitor was immediately drawn to the red wall on which 39 imagineerings were hung. The central work was the etching '*The Big Family*' (The Cranston Family of Haddington.) (Fig 5)



Figure 64 Gallery entry *Familiar Ground* Examination Exhibition, Plimsoll Gallery, College of the Arts, Hobart 2015. Figure 65 Installation of the Imagineering works with Sentinels. (See Fig 66)

Other works were hung balanced off this central image. In clustering the etchings I intended them to be seen together as a brain space, one series, or even one major work, albeit in fragments. The arrangement was also designed to reference the aforementioned informal group hang that was common in Victorian times, thus adopting this trope to engage the viewer with the nostalgia that underpins this group of images. Gallery seating was provided for those who wished to linger with what was quite a detailed and complex collection of imagery.





Figure 66 Roslyn Meeker *Sentinel (Right)* 2015 42 x 30cm Steel and photopolymer etching

The *Sentinel* stags (Fig 63) work as quotation of the stags that marked the conversation of identity in Glasgow's Kelvingrove exhibition and Ballarat's *For Auld Lang Syne*.

I configured two other gallery spaces. The first housed the five *Imagineering Metaphors* works and 'A Case for Pilgrimage.' (Fig 35) In the other space, the *Field Research* suite took advantage of the airiness provided by the light from the adjacent courtyard windows. The key aim here was to suggest the idea of journey and to provide a contrasting, less intense psychological space to that which was on offer elsewhere in the gallery. As discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 38), the reportage qualities pursued were interrupted by imagineered etchings and collages. During installation some of these interruptive prints also 'doubled up', shifting the linear delivery, reiterating the displacement and loss of vertical hold also previously discussed.

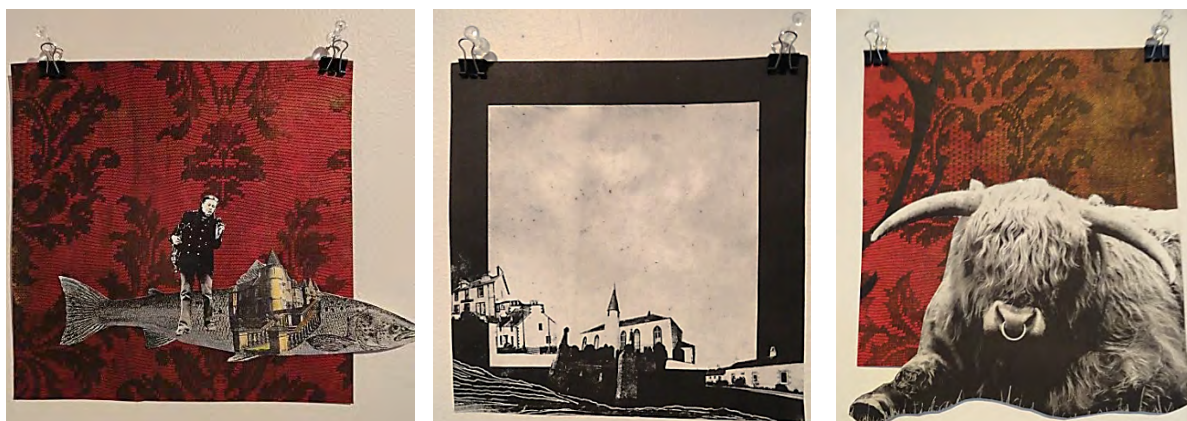


Figure 67 (Top) Showing part of the *Field Research* installation. Note horizontal hang and ‘slippage.’  
Fig 68-70 Examples of the collaged/imagined etchings that ‘interrupted’ the *Field Research* installation.

The distinct hanging plans that formed the *Familiar Ground* exhibition evolved during the research. The fundamental vision for the exhibition was formed from the wallpapered hallway of my grandparent’s home, and a progression of differing layouts were pursued through experimentation in various exhibition spaces. The deep red of the walls found in the Brunswick St Gallery was replicated and manipulated across the body of work and into the Plimsoll Gallery, becoming ground for the group hanging of the imagineerings.

Pictured and imagineered, the works in the three gallery spaces form the *Familiar Ground* submission. This expression, my images of my identity, now form a fragment in the large field of Australian multicultural and diasporic art.

### **Summary**

With this short survey, the *Imagery of Identity*, I have sought to describe a very local field of multicultural printmakers dealing with diasporic issues. I widened my scope to see aspects of my work similar to that of Danie Mellor and his Post-Colonial take of identity. I looked at Scottish imagery of identity as it was seen by Scot Rachel Maclean, set against the Independence referendum, the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn, and the Year of Homecoming, an event in which, through the Cranston reunion, I came to experience a small part. I have pointed to how the discourse surrounding Scotland and its identity is in a state of revision through the examination of two exhibitions dealing with Scottish identity, staged in both Scotland and Australia. The idea of 'the Scottish gaze' was investigated and was acknowledged as central to the thesis. Finally, the *Familiar Ground* exhibition was discussed in regard to research, installation strategies and Scottish identity.

## CONCLUSION

The intent of this Masters research project was to explore and represent my identity as a Scottish-Australian through the visual means of collage and printmaking. I investigated diaspora and displacement, the notion of a hand-me-down homeland and an imagined place-based identity. The topic looks back to my grandparents' arrival in Australia a century ago and considers the adherence to Scottish culture pursued by the following generations.

Through appropriation of a pictorial language common to the Scottish Diaspora I interrogated the role played by romanticism, myth and metaphor in the picturing of a Scottish homeland by the descendants of immigrant Scots and their descendants. I dissected and deconstructed the attributes and handed down aesthetic tastes of Scottish culture. Tartanry – the kitsch in Scottish culture, and Scottishry – the authentic, was discussed in this exegesis in relation to the printed body of work and to yield insights on how attachments can be made to quite false aspects of Scottish history or culture. I examined and visually interrogated the cultural legacies, the photography and artefacts, histories, family narratives and spoken stories, romantic literature, poetry and song, high and low art forms, and passed down skills: all these played part in my imagining and image making. By steeping myself in this imagery, I found that much of my inheritance was a part of a consistent set of tropes and symbols, readily understood by my demographic.

From the outset of the project, Scottish romanticism was a source for my image making, and I unpacked the various components of it: the home, the noble generous peasant, the sublime, the wild, the perseverant. I worked my compositions to juxtapose these components and the resulting pictures took on a surreal logic, such that subconscious aspects of diasporic experience were permitted to form new associations. Romantic tropes such as sentimentality, a sense of nostalgia and melancholy exist in many of the works; so too depression, as plain as the blackness of the ink. Yet there is also a sense of hope and comfort figured in the warmth of an occasional sunrise or sunset and there is a security in the familiar textures of my childhood. There is a sense of contemplation and reverence, also a sense of play, with humour shown in the puns, the compositions, the juxtapositions, albeit a dry and

quiet type of humour. Permeating the works there are truncated fragments of stories made visible. The works are autobiographical, but, they also reflect the Scottish diaspora, my own imagining working as example of what Basu suggests is part of a diasporic 'shared imagining of its homeland.' (Basu 2007 p.92)

There was timeliness to this project. On a personal level a string of family anniversaries led me to reminisce. There was the marvellous gathering of family in Haddington. There was acknowledgement. A family museum archive now exists and there was a staggering amount published about the Cranstons of Haddington aside from cousin Stuart's novel. *Familiar Ground* contributes to this arena by providing the pictorial agglomeration of numerous narrative threads, to bind the relation between landscape, narrative and identity.

The timeliness is also apparent from what I have argued is a contemporary state of revisionism in regards to Scottish art and a current re-emergence of conversation in regard to Scottish identity, brought to the fore during the 2014 Scottish Independence referendum. This position was supported by reference to the writings of anthropologist Paul Basu and historian Tom Devine. It was clearly defined by the nature of Kelvingrove's identity exhibition that sought to accept the romanticism but debunk the myth. The revisionism in the Ballarat exhibition shattered colonial myths by presenting a diverse collection of categorized Scottishry to support their claims of the Scots being the makers and shakers of Australia's colonial past. Most relevant to this research was the dialogue about how 'a Scottish gaze' influenced the traditions of landscape portrayal in Australia. As in the Kelvingrove and Ballarat exhibitions, my research has dismissed myth: many of my works clearly pinpoint the particular myth involved, whilst still appreciating the sentiment enormously.

In the *Field Research* series, I weighed the over-romanticised Scotland of my imagination against the actual home ground experience. In this suite of works, I gave form to my own revisionist stance. While the *Familiar Ground* series employs the uneasy juxtaposition of collage, the *Field Research* works depict a more integrated pictorial plane, to configure a balance between psychological and material realities. The 'Scottish gaze' as a psychological construct is most evidently a filter for the *Field Research* art response.



My concluding stance on my printed work is that my gaze, my identity, and perhaps much of my world, is of Scottish invention. Formed from cultural legacy, imagined home and homecoming, *Familiar Ground* adds to contemporary research into the diasporic condition, the Scottish diaspora and post-colonial Australian art.

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